DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 250 CS 207 663

AUTHOR Mallick, David, Ed.; And Others
TITLE New Essays in the Teaching of Literature. Proceedings of the Literature Commission International Conference on the Teaching of English (3rd, Sydney, Australia, 1980).
INSTITUTION Australian Association for the Teaching of English.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-909955-38-7
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 225p.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Association of Teachers of English, Inc., P.O. Box 203, Norwood, South Australia 5068 ($7.00).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Creative Writing; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; Drama; Elementary Secondary Education; *English Instruction; Fiction; Higher Education; *Literature Appreciation; Mass Media; Poetry; *Reader Response; *Teacher Role; Teaching Methods; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Reader Text Relationship

ABSTRACT

Drawn fron a conference attended by more than 150 educators from England, the United States, Canada, South Africa, India, China, New Zealand, and Australia, the papers in this compilation deal with a variety of aspects of literature instruction. Papers in the first section of the compilation provide reports on seminars held during the week-long conference. Among the topics discussed in this section are the nature of reading, the expressive response to literature, decentering abstractions, and the future of English instruction. The second section contains the three lectures given at the conference: (1) "Response--Begin Again" by Margaret Meek of England; (2) "Literacy Culture, Media Culture, Student Culture" by Peter Moss of Australia; and (3) "Literature Teaching and Some of Our Responsibilities" by Geoffrey Summerfield of England. This section also contains invited papers on the teaching of literature, each of which touches upon some point of theory made in one of the three lectures. The third section offers papers that concentrate primarily on the problem of response to literature and the role of the teacher. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED239250

NEW ESSAYS IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LITERATURE COMMISSION
THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA 1980

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

AATE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 207663

EDITED BY

David Mallick
Peter Moss
Ian Hansen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Association for the Teaching of English would like to thank Glenys, Robyn, Shirley, Marie and Sandy for their patience and skill in assisting with the preparation of this book.

We are also grateful to the following for permission to print three of the poems which participants discussed at length within the Literature Commission.

Howard Nemerov, for permission to reprint his poem The Companions.
Faber and Faber, for permission to reprint February by Ted Hughes.
Cassel and Co., for permission to reprint Welsh Incident by Robert Graves.

Note.

A number of essays in this book discuss participants' responses to these three poems. Readers who wish to refer directly to the text will find the poems in an Appendix at the back of the book.

PETER SMART, New Zealand.
(1934-1982)
Members of the Commission will be saddened to learn of the sudden death of Peter Smart. He will be remembered, especially, for his spirited summary in the plenary session of the Literature Commission.

New essays in the teaching of literature.

ISBN 0 909955 38 7

2. English literature - Study and teaching -
Addresses, essays, lectures.
I. Mallick, David. II. Moss, Peter D. (Peter David), 1938-. III. Hansen, I.V. (Ian Victor).
IV. Australian Association for the Teaching of English Inc.

820'. 7'1

© A.A.T.E., 1982.

Australian Association for the Teaching of English Inc.,
P.O. Box 203, Norwood. South Australia. 5067.

CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION : SEARCHING FOR A FOCUS 1
David Mallick (Australia)

PART I : TEACHERS RESPONDING

WHAT IS READING? 10
Bill Corcoran (Australia)

THE EXPRESSIVE RESPONSE 18
Jan Wooley (Australia)

DECENTERING ABSTRACTIONS : OURSELVES AND OTHERS 32
Judy Parker (Australia)

GIVING VOICE 44
Peter Moss (Australia)

A WEEK IN THREE HOURS : TEACHERS TALKING AND WRITING 52
Ian Hansen (Australia)

A FORAY INTO THE FUTURE 63
Geoffrey Summerfield (England)

ENGLISH, ORTHODOXY AND THE EIGHTIES 75
David Homer (Australia)

PART II : TEACHERS TEACHING

A. LECTURES - SOME THEORY

RESPONSE - BEGIN AGAIN 85
Margaret Meek (England)

LITERACY CULTURE, MEDIA CULTURE, STUDENT CULTURE 97
Peter Moss (Australia)

LITERATURE TEACHING AND SOME OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES 112
Geoffrey Summerfield (England)

Page

B. COMMENTS - SOME PRACTICE

THE TWO CULTURES - LITERATURE AND MEDIA - SOME STRATEGIES FOR THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM 125
Christine Higgins (Australia)

SAMPLES - SIMPLES 137
Geoffrey Summerfield (England)

BEYOND ENGLISH AND THE CLASSROOM 144
Ian Reid (Australia)

DIVERGENCE AND CONTINUITY : THE LITERATURE COMMISSION AND HIGHER EDUCATION 149
Peter Putnis (Australia)

THE PLAY'S NOT THE THING : CHARLOTTE'S WEB IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL 157
Judith Parker (Australia)

RESPONDING TO POETRY 161
John Allen (Australia) and
Michael Angelotti (United States)

PART III : FOUR DIFFERENT EMPHASES

STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH TEACHING : WHICH LEG FIRST? 171
Ian Hansen (Australia)

1984 AND OUR TEACHING 182
Florence Lewis (United States)

TEXT AND READER 191
David Mallick (Australia)

AFTERWORD AND A WAY AHEAD 214
Peter Moss and
Christine Higgins (Australia)

APPENDIX

INTRODUCTION :

SEARCHING FOR A FOCUS

David Mallick (AUSTRALIA)

In a commission with a title as wide as "Literature", including children's literature", a focus had to be sought carefully. With delegates from varied national and professional backgrounds it was perhaps inevitable that there would be criticism of any programme. Some would say that it was too practical; others that it was too theoretical; others that it was too narrow, too wide; some would complain that it was not suitable for such and such an age group.

Over 150 delegates from eight different countries - England, the United States of America, Canada, South Africa, India, China, New Zealand, Australia - enrolled in the literature commission. These delegates came together with one thing in common - a passionate conviction in the importance of their work. But they also came with differences - the different ages of the students they taught; their different national traditions in culture, society, politics and hence, in the teaching of English. It was hoped that these differing traditions and teaching contexts, rather than creating negative tensions, would enable us to close the commission with some significant generalisations and insights. This would be achieved by the significance and importance of the focus chosen for the commission.

Would the focus be found:

(a) In broad theoretical questions.

(i) For example, from a period when the centrality of literature in English teaching was easily assumed we have come to a period when many think it is being pushed into the background by theorists about language, literature and English teaching. Is this so? Are many English teachers beginning to emphasise the value of personal experience in talking and writing more than the secondary experience of literature? If this is so what are the signs of it in the classroom? Is the change of emphasis to be welcomed? Is this polarisation necessary?

(ii) Have we too long relied on the assumed value of literature and do we now need a crisper clarification of the nature and function of literature, a clarication that will do justice to the role of the reader as well as the cultural heritage?

Two problems were foreseen. Would such immediate questions invite divisiveness? We have sufficient evidence of a polarising into the language and literature camps. And were they questions which would enable us to keep the classroom implications easily before us? And so some disquiet was expressed about making these questions the central issues for the commission though it was realised that they were questions which would be raised in seminar discussions and lectures.

(b) Or would the focus be found in more narrow practical questions?

  (i) The dangers and limitations of thematic teaching.

  (ii) The influence of examinations on teaching and learning. Thirty years ago L.C. Knights claimed there was nothing to be said in favour of examinations in English - from the point of view of education that is. Are there signs that large external exams are coming back into favour? If so, why?

  (iii) School organisation and the practical implications for the English teacher.

  (iv) What children's literature is available and how can we use this literature in class?

  (v) The problem of relevance. "The literature must be relevant to the needs and interests of the students." But what can such an obvious statement mean in practice? Are there dangers lurking in this simple request?

  (vi) The teaching of literature in universities and its influence on students who are to be teachers.

  (vii) The problem of continuity. I feel certain Eric Hadley is right when he refers to the "poverty of the false continuities of themes and issues". But what does he mean when he argues that "the only real continuity lies in the continuity of thought and conversation between a teacher and his pupils."1.

It was certainly not our intention to undervalue the importance of such methodological problems. It was realised there would be many conversations on such issues. But it was argued that for ten to twenty years English teachers have been struggling for clarity about the nature of their subject and the struggle has very often involved the dissemination of curriculum ideas and materials. But it was thought that there might be something inadequate in the contribution. The inadequacy could be that provision of such materials and ideas has not been set in the context of a deeper, developing rationale. James Britton argues that only intelligent theory can give us a consistent way of thinking against which our actual day to day practice can be evaluated. He claims that in so complex an activity as teaching we will always fall short of our aims but our practice can only be evaluated against those aims. The impact of new ideas and new material, he argues must be upon rational rather than upon our immediate behaviour. Without some developing philosophy we are likely to follow the newest educational movement, fad or perhaps worse still, fall back on some discredited practice.

It became apparent what we were looking for:

(a) An examination of a central theoretical issue, the practical implications of which could be immediately opened up.

(b) Situations that would provoke discussion of a practical nature but discussion that would not long remain innocent of theory.

The clue for the focus was found in an odd place - in my lesson notes early in my teaching career. The notes concerned the teaching of Wordsworth's poem "Michael" to some 15 year olds. It was even then one of my favourite narrative poems - a moving document of a father's love for his son and the son's final betrayal. Now the important point here lies in the lesson notes and the questions I asked about the poem. Four of these questions are:

What makes this a narrative poem?

What is the meaning of the following lines...............?

Give two contrasting characteristics of Michael and his son.

Tell the story in your own words.

The narrowness of the questions is obvious and the question we ask is whether such teaching reveals a limited methodology on the part of the teacher or does the practice suggest a more serious weakness in the pedagogical and literary thinking of the teacher.

But there is a further and more interesting point. I have an essay I wrote on the teaching of English, an essay written at much the same time as the lesson on "Michael". In it I quote with considerable approval a paragraph from the Shakespearean critic, L.C. Knights. It is a quotation that has for years been a touchstone for me in my teaching of literature, even at the stage of giving the lesson on "Michael". Knights wrote:

> "I know that imagination is sometimes referred to as though it were something quite different from - or even opposed to those mental processes by which we reach out for truth and try to ground ourselves in things as they are. That is not so. Imagination in the writer is that responsive, creative activity by which he realises - makes real - a particular bit of experience, and embodies in words his sense of it in its directness and fulness - its implications and its signficance and value to him as a living human being. The activity to which its words prompt the reader is similarly an imaginative activity - responsive, creative and realising. That realising activity may demand now the use of discursive reason, now the play of feeling and sympathy, now the awareness of the senses but it is more than the sum of thinking plus feeling plus sensing. It is an activity of the whole soul of man." 2.

Now this is not just polemic. There are too many hard verbs - "ground ourselves", "realise" - and too many working adjectives - "responsive", "creative", "realising". Knights has a deep insight into what teaching literature is all about, as does D.H. Lawrence who is also quoted in the same essay with approval.

> "It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore, the novel properly handled can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the passionate secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening."

The important point I am making here, of course, is that these insightful statements are quoted with approval in an essay written at the same time as I was giving the murderously unrealising activities I described with the poem "Michael".

There has been considerable research into the way our teaching can get in the way of real learning. Most of this research has concerned subjects other than English. What we urgently need are detailed studies of what happens in English classrooms. But there could be some doubt how such studies might influence the behaviour of other teachers. It was argued in early discussions about the conference focus that many teachers see response to literature as a simple process and that this could account for some of the heavy-handed treatment of literature in the classroom. It is possible that many teachers have an inadequate understanding of the nature of response. The polarising vocabulary that we so often use shows that this may be true. Dichotomies such as,

objective or subjective

clear thinking or emotional

impersonal or personal

accurate or impressionistic

knowledge or appreciation

text or reader,

are unsatisfactory because they describe polarities often taken by specialists - academics, school teachers - that personal, emotional, subjective are the enemies of true reading, learning and discipline, revealing self-indulgence and irresponsibility. 3.

But the question remains of how best to make teachers aware of the complexity of literary response so that this awareness might influence their own classroom behaviour. It is likely the most effective way is to put teachers in the position of learners. And so it was decided that this would be the purpose of Day 1.

One guiding sentence was formulated: "In what way can we say that reading is a creative activity? Is there necessarily any dichotomy between the creative and the critical?"

The touchstone quotations for the day were:

> "As teachers we should remember how long it takes even to respond to poems of our own choice, how often we are naturally quite numb to parts or wholes as we encounter literature, and not expect too much from the students. First encounters in the classroom should deliberately hold back formulation, should hark away from everything that is not tentative and partial." 4.
>
> "Response is more like a negative in a developing dish rather than a train coming through a tunnel." 5.

The theoretical questions to guide the discussions were:

(1) What actually happens when we respond to a poem, a story - in private, in discussion?

(2) What is the difference between an incorrect and an insufficient response? Can we argue that insufficient responses are useful or even essential?

(3) What do we mean by irrelevant associations?

(4) When is it useful to call for an essay as a form of response? What other forms can literary response take?

But it was recognized that such questions are too theoretical. Any discussion that was to be fruitful had to be rooted in the particular and where better to find that than in the teacher's own learning, in this case coming to grips with difficult poems.

The poems selected for the morning session were "February" by Ted Hughes and "The Companions" by Howard Nemerov.

The instructions given were: "Each group will work on an interpretation of the poems. Each group will decide how it will choose to read the poems and what kinds of presentation could do justice to the interpretations?"

The poem selected for the afternoon session was "Welsh Incident" by Robert Graves.

The instruction given was: "How can each group realise the poem in performance in order to do justice to its meaning."

But there was another point that guided us in deciding on the focus. How could we make a fruitful connection with the International Conferences of York and Dartmouth? James Britton, at the end of the York Conference said that the next conference must start where York finished. But it was thought that a major issue in teaching literature was raised at Dartmouth, an issue that still bedevils us and is still waiting greater clarity of explanation. In Growth through English, John Dixon, in commenting on Matthew Arnold's vision of great literature offering a criticism of life and the study of the "best that has been thought and spoken", wrote: "One might point to the betrayal of the vision in a thousand classrooms today where 'the precious life-blood of a master spirit' becomes a series of inky marginal annotations and essay notes; but that would be to miss its real limitations. The central one concerns culture. In the heritage model the stress was on culture as a given. There was a constant temptation to ignore culture as the pupil knows it, a network of attitudes to experience and personal evaluations that he develops in a living response to his family and neighbourhood. But this personal culture is what he brings to literature; in the light of it he reads the linguistic symbols." 6.

Now there are many time bombs in this statement. Is John Dixon over-simplifying things by equating the shortcomings of the cultural heritage model with the fact that literature has often been taught badly? Do we still have to come to closer grips with the difficult concept of culture? Does he object to the cultural heritage because he sees it as something static and because it centred around literature and high culture? Does the work of the hundreds of poets and novelists, including authors of children's novels, work which is readily available to school children, come under this term cultural heritage? There are problems here that have not been clearly enough worked on since Dartmouth.

Earlier in the paper I gave reasons why it was decided not to make this a central issue in the commission though it was realised that it would be an issue raised in various ways and in different contexts. But it was claimed that we would be less than honest if we did not see the truth of the first sentence: "One might point to the betrayal of this vision in a thousand classrooms today where the precious life-blood of a master spirit becomes a series of inky marginal annotations and essay notes." The question faced was how could we explore this problem and explore it in a positive way.

There is another quotation in Growth Through English that gave us our lead. "There must be an interplay between his (the readers) personal world and the world of the writer: the teacher of English must acknowledge both sides of the experience and to know both of them intimately if he is to help bring the two into fruitful relationship."7. We asked whether it was this fruitful relationship David Holbrook was getting at when he said "the creative teacher must have a long term aim, which is one of not merely promoting self-expression but of establishing links between the civilisation which is growing in each child with the inheritance of civilisation on the shelves of libraries and in the English tongue itself." 8.

And so we arrived at the central issue for Day 2. Do we need a clearer understanding and more documentation of this fruitful relationship? Should we be seeking more forcefully a reasonable equilibrium between the child-centred and the subject-centred ideologies, between the person and his cultural heritage? Can we argue that any worthwhile theory of cultural education must recognize the place of the child and culture, individuality and civilised values?

But these questions were considered too universal. It was decided that we needed to look at the questions at a more domestic level, to look at the questions in the light of what goes on in the classroom. The second guiding sentence was formulated: "If we can agree that the best reading involves a creative-critical response, what is there in our teaching which can inhibit or facilitate this response?"

The touchstone quotations for the day were:

> "The sincere and innocent reader is much too easily bounced into emptying his mind by any literary highwayman who says 'I want your opinion', and much too easily laid low because he has nothing to produce on these occasions." 9.
>
> "A response is personal or it is nothing." 10.
>
> "Teachers should avoid on the one hand a teacher domination that discourages pupils from active learning, and on the other the abandonment of pupils to their own devices. Thrown in at the deep end, some pupils might learn something, but teachers would be abdicating their duty if they did not take some responsibility for what their pupils learn." 11.

The theoretical questions to guide the discussion were:

(1) What kinds of critical judgment do we expect and admire? At what age?

(2) Are some methods of eliciting response open to criticism? In our desire for certainty about the students' comprehension are we likely to ignore, inhibit or discourage other less tangible but perhaps more important responses?

(3) Which of our classroom strategies and attitudes can encourage a narrow, conforming response?

(4) Are we too interested in eliciting early, explicit formulations and not sufficiently alert to the possibilities of the partial and selective response?

(5) What possibilities are there for building on responses made - in talk or in writing - in subsequent lessons?

(6) What different kinds of discussion can go on in different circumstances - in small groups, in full class discussion?

(7) What are the main differences between the way a teacher would talk about a story with his friends and the way he would want his class to talk about it?

But again it was recognized that it was important not to discuss such questions as abstractions but to look at them in the light of real documents and where better to find the documentation than in the delegates' own teaching.

Each delegate was sent a copy of Graham Greene's story "I Spy".[12.] Delegates were requested to use the story in class, make a tape-recording of the lesson and choose parts of the transcript which they thought significant for some reason. Copies of the transcript extracts were to be brought to the commission. Delegates were asked to make notes on the following:

1. Under what circumstances was the story used?

2. What was the aim of the lesson?

3. Did (or could) the lesson lead to further English work?

4. How successful was the lesson judged to be?

Each class was also to be asked to produce a piece of writing on the story "I Spy". Delegates were requested to bring two examples of the writing to the commission, make notes on their role in this writing and an estimation of its effect.

The third and the fourth days of the commission were spent in lectures given by Geoffrey Summerfield, Peter Moss and Margaret Meek and in seminars which discussed the practical implications of theoretical points made in the lectures.

This document from the Commission is divided into 3 parts. Part I, called Teachers Responding, contains the reports from the seminar leaders on the week's discussions. It is important to note that these are personal reports. Each seminar leader was invited to write on what he considered to be the main issues explored in his group.

Part 2, Teachers Teaching, contains the three lectures given to the Commission. As well a number of delegates were invited to submit articles on the practice of teaching literature, articles which would make some point of contact with the theory of a lecture.

Part 3, Four Different Emphases, is an attempt to draw together some threads and tension points on the problem of response to literature, concentrating particularly on the role of the teacher.

REFERENCES.

1. In an unpublished paper called "We didn't do nothing in English today. We just talked".
2. L.C.Knights, "Literature and the Teaching of Literature" in Explanations, Chatto and Windus.
3. I refer you to the denser title of Robert Witkin's The Intelligence of Feeling, Heinemann.
4. D.W.Harding, "Response to Literature" in M.Meek et al (eds), The Cool Web, The Bodley Head.
5. J. Britton, "Response to Literature", in J. Squire Response to Literature, Dartmouth Seminar Papers.
6. J. Dixon, Growth through English, Oxford University Press.
7. J. Dixon, Growth through English, Oxford University Press.
8. D. Holbrook, "Creativity in the English Programme" in G. Summerfield Creativity in English, Dartmouth Seminar Papers.
9. I.A.Richards, Practical Criticism, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
10. F.R.Leavis, Two Cultures? The Significance of C.P. Snow.
11. D. Barnes, From Communication to Curriculum, Penguin.
12. The story concerns a small boy, Charlie Stowe, whose father owns a tobacconist's shop. One night Charlie sneaks into the shop to steal a packet of cigarettes. While there his father comes into the shop accompanied by two men who are taking him away. The three men leave the shop and Charlie is left wondering. He realises that he is very like his father "doing things in the dark which frightened him" and wishes that he could tell his father how much he loved him.

PART 1 :

TEACHERS RESPONDING

WHAT IS READING?

Bill Corcoran (AUSTRALIA)

"If we can agree that the best reading involves a creative-critical response, what is there in our teaching which can inhibit or facilitate that response?" Naturally enough, the Literature Commission's large focusing question generated a series of subsidiary questions, any one of which could have become the question of a lifetime for a group of sensitive English teachers. What happened, almost inevitably, in a five-day professional retreat from the classroom was a unanimous desire to address a prior question: What do teachers need to know which will help them create a response-centred classroom where students and literature become the heart of the enterprise? The theoretical question subsumed the practical because of the need to dwell on knowledge which informs our teaching, but which is never directly taught.

The processes of stating a series of value positions, of articulating private theories of literary response, gave shape and structure to the discussion, whether in the context of small groups sharing individual responses to a couple of 'teacher-selected' poems, in retrospective analyses of one's own teaching of a short story, or in reaction to the illuminating and provocative public statements made by Margaret Meek, Geoffrey Summerfield, Peter Moss and John Dixon.

On the broadest of fronts, some civilized disagreement constantly accompanied attempts to address that most complex of questions, 'What is a reading?' The beginnings of an answer were to be found in exchanges like the following:

> I think you can make such poems much too mysterious. I don't fully understand 'February'. But just like any poem, on one level it's a box full of rhetorical tricks of one kind or another, things like paragraph organization, phrases used twice, and so on. Just an examination of the language might do. I think you can come fairly stone cold to a lot of poems and still get an idea of the organization. For a lot of poetry, that's the teachable part, an acquaintance with the rhetorical bag of tricks through which the reader needs to be organized. The rest may be private beyond that.

How, then, to characterize the specifically 'private'?

> That silent reading (or 'February') spoke to me sufficiently of what the poem was about. It gave me a clear grasp of what the poem essentially was about. Then, to come afterwards to have to talk about it was an excrescence on my initial response. And I had to say at a certain point, 'Look you're only going to

> spoil this for me if we go any further with it.' My first reading was enough. To go on talking about it would only muck it up for me...There is a delicate problem for the teacher and the curriculum, isn't there? How do you structure things so that Hilary and Heather, and anybody else who wants to go on talking about the thing in their own personal way can go on? But my plea is to leave me out...I've got to go away and wrestle with Hughes by myself. So the problem is that even in the most enlightened of curricula we are still locked in to a use of time which doesn't allow for the provision of opportunities for delayed responses, reading in restrospect, reconsiderations which won't come out in any immediate discussion or piece of writing. We must find some way of withholding a final say as teacher.

We were thus immediately and constantly in the throes of attempting to reconcile reader, text and context. The inescapable reality was that a reading must consider the interaction of all three: a reader, complete with private concepts, attitudes and experiences, perceptual abilities, and a unique emotional and psychological state; the literary work, in every sense and primarily a verbal construct, characterized by a voice which spoke about a particular experience to at least a possible audience; and a reading situation, marked by notions of free choice or compulsion, classroom-based or clearly located in one's out-of-school (real?) world.

There were certainly clear points of agreement beginning to emerge from the first morning's discussion. We knew, for example, that the private response was partial, perhaps inchoate and idiosyncratic. We knew, as well, that literary discussion depended on imposed, but not necessarily shared, assumptions regarding the purpose of the discussion. It certainly 'mucked the poem up' for some. It was becoming clear that the teacher's voice had at least as much potential for cancelling out the poet's, as it had for lifting the words from the page. The problem, as always, was one of time. There was agreement that the 'texts' did not become 'poems' until they had become recreated or resymbolized in the minds of readers. There was, however, slightly less agreement that the central critical problem was that of justifying one's transaction to others. A couple of days later, Geoffrey Summerfield seemed to put his finger on the cause of this disquiet. He referred to reading as a peculiarly 'monastic enterprise'.

There seemed, as well, to be a strong desire to draw a distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic reading. To what extent were the processes involved in learning to read literature qualitatively different from those involved in learning to read? We agreed that the nature of the distinction was as much misunderstood by those teachers who, at one level, equated the experience of basal readers with the experience of literature, as it was by practical critics who, at another level, dehumanized the process by presenting it as a mastery of generic architecture. What is it in our teaching that forces a thirteen-year-old, for example, to substitute the following gibberish for the lived-through experience of a story?

> The development of a high climax in the story has been accomplished. In the beginning, the author explains all the details for example: 'The child was fully

> dressed sitting on her father's lap near the window.' Here a very low climax was presented. Gradually the climax grew as he went along. When the child in the story refused to open her mouth the climax mounted. As the author phrases it 'the battle began'. The highest point of the climax was, when, nearing the end of the story, the doctor overcame the girl by force, and uncovered her secret, then the climax was over, and as in the beginning the author finished with an unusual ending, leaving the child crying in defeat, a low climax.

We were suitably appalled at the tendency to rush students too quickly into making a distinction between knowledge of, and knowledge about. It was certainly agreed that such a non-aesthetic reading succeeded only in cancelling out affect, of substituting a spurious sense of aesthetic distance for a testimony of personal engagement. There was general agreement, in fact, that 'good' students of literature had merely learnt certain formulaic rules of discourse which they could then substitute for their non-experience of literature.

> I want to make the point, again, that if the reading of literature is a private experience, those sorts of forced public responses become just socialized rituals. I remember, also, somebody saying that studying genres, and things like plot, character and theme, and so on is a bit like a chemist studying test tubes, rather than what goes on inside the test tube.

By the end of the first day, then, the seminar was at least implicitly armed with a set of teaching imperatives which provided a consensual base. We needed, first, to be aware of how we consciously structure literary situations so that students felt comfortable in expressing their responses, any responses. We knew that blocks to honest, independent responses were likely to result from teachers' emphasizing factual aspects of the work, by premature pronouncements of what the work really meant, by a lack of cooperative investigation of the work, by lip-service allowances for personal involvement, or by a lack of provision of variety in the mode of response.

On the last issues, we baulked at the instruction to dramatize 'Welsh Incident'. The reasons given were various:

> It's just that I'm trying to hold to the boundaries of the language, and to discover the sort of logical impossibilities within it, but you're using it as a jumping off point, a sort of game of imaginative leg-pulling. How monstrous can you get? That sort of thing.

> I've got a feeling that these were the sort of acceptances that were about in the early seventies. You know, if you don't dramatize everything. If you walk past a class and Dylan and Cohen aren't being played, you're not teaching properly. That sort of mood where everything, every personal comment we can make is good and acceptable, really in there! Many of them are not acceptable, and I've got to look trendiness in the eye now.

Most of all, 'the sea caves of Criccieth' were indeed a long way from Sydney Harbour, and the populations of 'Pwllheli, Criccieth, Portmadoc, Borth, Tremadoc, Penrhyhdeudraeth (and Caernarvon)' spoke uneasily to those of Toowoomba, Kalkadoon, Manjimup, Koongawa, Cootamundra, or even Bathurst, Hobart or Adelaide. Just perhaps we heard as little of 'the Harloc Silver Band', as it 'played *Marchog Jesu*/ on thirty-seven shimmering instruments', as our sixteen-year-olds hear of parts of Shakespeare, Keats, or Jane Austen. A form of a conclusion seemed inevitable. Much of the highly sophisticated literature of a different cultural heritage might be inappropriate for most of the students of the eighties most of the time.

Yet there were still problems, of course, even with 'contemporary' literature. We were trying to come up with a position statement in reply to Whitehead's (1976) charge, that since Dartmouth and Dixon there was the suggestion of 'a higher educational value for children's talk and writing, rather than for their reading of 'real' literature.' 13. The issue was stated this way:

> There is really a lot of begging the question. We had an enormous fight a few years ago with teachers who were loosely reading *I am David*, deliberately helping their kids to read the book as if it were a World War II prisoner-of-war book. And in all ignorance! Honest to God they were ignorant! The teachers were simply ignorant of the book. When we'd say, 'Look this has to be post-1955. There's Queen Elizabeth II mentioned there.' And we'd get 'What? What?' This little kids' book suddenly becoming a treatise about satellite communist countries. 'We don't know which country it is. Still, very cleverly written!' For a long time teachers were reading the book in blithe ignorance. Does that count as a reading? Is that a reading of *I am David* if you say it's a World War II prisoner-of-war book.

While it was a bit chastening to be branded an imperfect reader, of committing a form of the intentional fallacy, some of the subsequent charges hit a little harder: 'Teachers just don't read the books the kids are reading....Sadly, teachers in secondary schools stop talking to kids about books.... The problem with David Brindley's list is that it's a nice, safe comfortable one, but we have to start somewhere. I'm sure there may be a problem with the comfortable value books like *A Dog So Small* and *The Silver Sword*.'

There was another book, prominently displayed by the publishers, which some seminar members had just begun dipping into. David Allen's (1980) *English Teaching Since 1965: How Much Growth?* represented the most current and accessible critique of Dartmouth and Dixon. His questions were also our questions: 'Where lay now the authority, the confidence of the teacher in selecting books for children? Where lay the guidance for the teacher whose pupils said they saw no point in reading or writing? Where lay the authority for any expression of judgment on the part of the teacher except as purely arbitrary and subjective? Where lay the authority for any insistence or persistence?' (44) We certainly had the benefit of John Dixon's own voice, speaking thirteen years after *Growth Through English*: 'I would be very disappointed if the state of my present thinking were not old thinking.' The only problem for David Allen was that he was not there to hear Dixon propose a more than adequate theory of the teaching of the mother-tongue meshed with a convincing (and provisional?) account of a theory of culture. The poem by the little West Indian girl swelled with pride in her own culture, with the power drawn from her own cultural roots, and in the process her plight was unquestionably distanced and universalized.

These questions that David Allen had raised were 'value-ridden questions' and we could be absolutely certain that John Dixon stood falsely accused of not offering directions for growth, of not recognising the cultural imperatives of the teacher, the family, the peer group, and wider social agencies such as the media. In our own ideological forays, we recognised that teacher intervention involved fundamental ways of addressing these questions of value and responsibility. The point received sharpest definition when it appeared that we might be about to commit ourselves to a new orthodoxy, that The Chocolate War, for example, was a book that all adolescents must read. But in what context?

> Examine the value constructs in Cormier's work generally. Examine his view of the world, the moral realities that permeate his novels. And consider the fact, that as English teachers we have drawn notoriety to his work. We are the ones who have set The Chocolate War for the kids to read.

The question of a moral imperative did not end there.

> I would not want kids to read The Chocolate War unaided. I would want to share it with them. I'd want to share because I'm paternalistic enough to suggest that the young need some kind of adult sounding board on questions of right and wrong, what kinds of stances the kids should take. After all, they're looking for models themselves for emergence into adult life. How's that for old-fashionedness?

The response was immediate, and perenially controversial:

> That's not paternalism. That's a justifiable ideological stance. We all have belief structures. We may only differ on the point at which we might want to intrude them.

Having accepted the responsibility of nominating a novel for our students to read, we were not about to absolve ourselves of the responsibility of intruding on, or attempting to influence the reading.

In these exchanges we were getting closer to our major problem. It did not seem too presumptuous to want to know some of the things that happen to our students through their reading. If too many teachers continued to evade genuine literary response, to fear subjectivity in their classrooms, it was for the most obvious of reasons. There remained little in their preservice education which served either as a theoretical introduction to the process of response, or as an explicit pedagogy which they could with confidence and commitment translate eventually into their own classrooms.

We could take, as a starting point, the propositions which emerged from the College English Association's position paper, more than adequately titled 'What Authorizes the Study of Literature?' (Foulke and Hartman, 1976). There were four principles, or points of consensus, which might stand as a rationale for changes in the teaching of literature in colleges or universities: first, that the undergraduate curriculum should not be defined as a mastery of a body of knowledge about literature; second, that the nature of literary experience is falsified if the work is conceived of as an object; third, that there is an absolute necessity for recognizing and articulating the multiple contexts which students actually use in their experience of reading; and finally, that it may be possible to see 'resymbolization' or 'reenactment' in the reader as the basis for the intellectual and affective experiences of reading and teaching.

Raymond Williams (1979) was recently asked about the relationship between theoretical developments in literary criticism and study and the way this seeps down into English practice in schools. Did he believe, for example, that, if Leavis' militant advocacy of literature had profoundly influenced one generation of English teachers, the current generation of teachers existed in a vacuum? He lighted on the 'late Leavis position' and its assumption (at least as far as the English teacher was concerned) that 'if you had learned values from the great literature you could, as it were, be above the battle'.(4) What the interviewer was probably getting at was a loss of nerve and fibre, the presumed result of any abandonment of courses firmly embedded in The Great Tradition. Williams' reply also contained a very clear warning of certain reactionary problems with the later Leavis:

> ... the Leavis influence is saying to people: Here is the great literature of the past. This will not just give you an idea of what these works are but it will armour you against the present. And this was a fatal thing to be armoured against. The present had to be there, either at the level of people wanting to do their own writing, or at another very important level of really working out what good uses of language were in our own world. (4)

Something like the same objections, we felt, underlay Whitehead's criticism of Britton. The 'vacuum', as Whitehead painted it, saw a loss in status of the processes of valuing and judging, though the positing of a continuity for 'gossip' and 'literature' did not necessarily lead to a denuding of criteria by which the language traffic of daily living could be evaluated.

The dilemma we were addressing was all too familiar. We were certain of significant gains in practice from student teachers who had undertaken courses in educational linguistics. The recognition that an aspiring English teacher's 'literary studies' provided little theoretical support and practical guidelines for language study left us with a distinct sense of imbalance. We found ourselves in close agreement with Raymond Wilson (1969) who felt himself compelled to reply to the literature as language stance of people like Doughty (1968) and Mittins (1969): 'Perhaps the new media and changing social conditions do require us to give more attention than we have formerly given to the non-literary usage; but we are in danger of surrendering values altogether if we follow those linguists who assert that literature is merely one of many Englishes'. (165-166) It seemed unfortunate, to say the least, that linguistic enlightenment, so necessary for broadened approaches of the study of communications, had not been accompanied by a complementary range of investigations which addressed those process and value issues distinctly associated with the teaching of literature.

To be quite explicit, it was felt that we must find a place in the preservice curriculum for a balancing study of some contemporary theorists of literary response. Certainly, on the evidence of our ongoing conversation, the newer 'received tradition' gave considerable eminence to the work of Harding, Britton, and Purves. But there were other names - Rosenblatt, Bleich, Fish, Iser, Slatoff, Lesser, and Holland - and variations on theory which should be known and applied. The missing study could be built around the transactional position captured by Slatoff (1970), who, in his acknowledgement that works of literature acquire value as they are perceived by human minds, wrote:

> Insofar as we divorce the study of literature from the experience of reading and view literary works as objects to be analysed rather than human expressions to be reacted to; insofar as we view them as providing order, pattern, and beauty as opposed to challenge and disturbance; insofar as we favour form over content, objectivity over subjectivity, detachment over involvement, theoretical over real readers; insofar as we worry more about incorrect responses than insufficient ones; insofar as we emphasize the distinctions between literature and life rather than their interpenetrations we reduce the power of literature and protect ourselves from it. (167-168).

The seminar had set itself a large and difficult question, 'What is reading?' Not to apply insights derived, for example, from Rosenblatt's (1978) distinction between aesthetic and efferent readings, Bleich's (1975, 1976) subjective paradigm, Holland's (1968, 1973, 1975) identity theme, Iser's (1972) account of the indeterminacy of literary texts, or Lesser's (1967) description of the functioning of the subconscious would render attempts at an explanation quite incomplete. We were at the end, then, at a more productive beginning, by acknowledging a need to formulate more precisely the questions we wanted put to reality and self-history, but only in the light of reconstructed theory.

REFERENCES

Allen, D. English Teaching Since 1965: How Much Growth? London: Heinemann Educational, 1980.

Bleich, D. Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism. Urbana, III.: NCTE, 1975.

________ "The Subjective Paradigm in Science, Psychology, and Criticism." New Literary History, 7 (Winter, 1976), 313-334.

Doughty, P. The Relevance of Linguistics to the English Teacher. London: Longmans, 1968.

Foulke, R. and Hartman, J.E. "What Authorizes the Study of Literature?" College English, 37 (January, 1976), 468-477.

Holland, Norman N. The Dynamics of Literary Response. New York: OUP, 1968.

________ 5 Readers Reading. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

________ "The New Paradigm: Subjective or Transactive?" New Literary History, 7 (Winter, 1976), 335-346.

Iser, Wolfgang. "A Phenomenology of the Reading Process." New Literary History, 3 (Winter, 1972), 279-299.

Lesser, Simon O. Fiction and the Unconscious. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

"Making it Active - Ken Worpole talks to Raymond Williams," The English Magazine, 1 (Spring, 1979), 4-7.

Mittins, W."Modern Views of English Language." English in Education, 3 (Spring, 1969), 15-20.

Rosenblatt, Louise. The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Slatoff, Walter J. With Respect to Readers: Dimensions of Literary Response. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970.

Whitehead, Frank. "The Present State of English Teaching: Stunting the Growth," The Use of English, 28 (Autumn, 1976), 11 - 17.

Wilson, R. "Language." in D. Thompson (ed.) Directions in the Teaching of English. Cambridge: CUP, 1969, 153-167.

THE EXPRESSIVE RESPONSE

Jan Wooley (AUSTRALIA)

Can we be more precise about the kinds of responses we want our students to make to literature? Can we discern different levels of response and are these levels linked to our students' increasing maturity of literary response?

These questions provided the focus for our examination of the transcripts collected by group members as a pre-conference activity. From our analysis of these transcripts we were able to make some tentative observations about the kinds and levels of responses elicited in students' discussions of the Graham Greene short story "I Spy". As an initial framework for our discussion of the transcripts we adopted the model proposed by Barnes, Churley and Thompson in "Group Talk and Literary Response": 1.

i. Putting oneself in the character's position;

ii. Treating character and incident as if they were real;

iii. Being aware of the novel as an artefact;

iv. Discussing the novel as existing in its own right as a 'virtual experience'.

However, the discussion of the various sub-groups suggested that this model did not adequately describe the kinds of responses evident in the transcripts we considered.

A common feature of the transcripts, irrespective of the age or ability of the groups involved, was the occurrence of what Barnes, Churley and Thompson called "sorting out activity, talk concerned with sorting out the plot, checking the order of incidents, confirming causes and motives." 2. Barnes et al recognised the predominance of such talk in the transcripts they examined but its importance is somewhat obscured if we consider only "levels of talking about literature". The commonality of this feature both in the transcripts reported in the English study and those examined at the conference suggests that this may indeed by a feature we need to include in our consideration of our pupils' response to literature. It seems that this initial stage may be necessary before students can move to an empathic or evaluative relationship with the work. As practised readers we are perhaps too often unaware of our students' uncertainty about the meanings of a text at this elementary level, yet from the evidence in the transcripts, the need to get things clear, to sort out exactly what happened, is the immediate response of many to their encounter with the text. A similar point is made by Penny Blackie in "Asking Questions". 3.

One of the teachers in the group followed the procedure suggested by Blackie and asked her students to make up their own questions about the story. The class consisted of 25 Year 11 students of mixed ability. They met initially in groups of five to formulate their questions. The questions from the group were then collated and provided the following list:

1. When was the story written? Which war was it? When and where is the story set?
2. What had Mr. Stowe done?

3. Where was Mr. Stowe going? Why?

4. Why did Mr. Stowe return to the shop with the two men?

4a. Who were the two strange men? Why were they with him?

5. Why would the neighbours wreck the tobacco shop? Why would the neighbours make Mrs. Stowe sell out?

6. Why does Mr. Stowe try to laugh?

7. Why didn't he want to tell his wife what he was doing or where he was going?

8. What is exhortation?

9. What was the hole in the counter floor?

10. Why didn't Charlie love his father?

11. Why did he want to go down and tell his father he loved him when he really hated him?

With the exception of the last two questions which suggest some interest in character and motivation and possibly empathy with Charlie, the questions compiled by the students are at the level Barnes et al call "Sorting-out", 4. and the last two questions reflect the students' confusion over the meaning of the story. The focus of the students' questions is on the plot of the story, on working out what had happened, rather than on the relationship between Charlie and his father. In the transcript of the students' later discussion, the "sorting out" questions take up most of the time while the questions about the relationship between the two characters are treated cursorily. The following extract from the transcript is characteristic of the discussion:

S: He was caught spying - during the war.

S: How do you know?

S: It was during the war and perhaps he was watching.

S: How do you know he wasn't enlisting in the army and they came to collect him?

S: They wouldn't come and get him in the middle of the night.

S: Looks as if he was spying ...

S: Obviously he's done something - or you wouldn't have two detectives ...

S: You don't know who the two men are.

S: They sound like ..... (jumble of argument)

S: He wouldn't be a spy because the guys were nice to him and you wouldn't be nice to a spy.

S: Why does everyone think he is spying?

S: Because it is called "I spy".

S: That's the boy spying on his father!

S: But he didn't mean to - it's the way it happened when he came down ...

S: Maybe Mr. Stowe got called up to go to war.

S: That's what I said!

S: Maybe he was .....? (jumbled) smuggling -

S: Yes - smuggling smokes.

S: No - he's got a cigarette shop, why should he?

Sa: He wasn't smuggling cigarettes - you can't take that information from the story - it's irrational!

S: Well - cigarettes have been scarce.

S: Something to do with 'smokes'.

S: Something fishy going on ..... (jumble)

S: Maybe he's done something good and it is so unusual ...

As the students are not identified on the transcript it is not possible to consider the contribution of the individual pupils. The discussion is generally inconclusive with the students failing to reach a common agreement on the questions they raise. In their search for answers, they typically respond as if character and incident were real, having an existence outside the story. Only Sa expresses an awareness of the story "as artefact an expression of the author's intentions". 5.

The transcript of a Year 9 class was very similar. Both groups showed little interest in the relationship explored in the story and failed to progress beyond an elementary perception and comprehension of the events described. Other groups also went through this sorting out process, but then went on to consider the other elements of the story.

How can we account for this difference? The answers we give must be very tentative but they may suggest avenues for further research. It may be that the story made demands beyond the reading ability of the class. The 'hidden plot' of the story works off a level of implication that may have been too great for the readers. Thus the frustration which comes through in the transcript and their failure to comprehend the events of the story may have prevented the development of an interest in the characters and their relationship. That this may be part of the answer is suggested by a comment made by a pupil from another group in his written response to the story. The story had been presented and discussed by the class as a whole and the teacher had focused the discussion on Charlie's relationship with his parents. After the discussion the class were asked to write about what Charlie had learned. The boy wrote:

> "First of all I want to note that in my first impression of the story I didn't look at it from the point of what Charlie Stowe learnt. I read it like I was listening to a story with a plot. The context was what I tried to clear out, not Charlie."

The writer does go on to show an understanding of the relationship between Charlie and his father, but his comment suggests that before he became involved in this aspect of the story it was necessary for him to sort out the plot details.

So often as teachers we ask students questions that assume an understanding at this basic level. The questions posed by the students themselves in the Year 11 group and the continuance of such questions through to tertiary level suggest such an assumption may not be warranted. We may need to provide opportunity at all grades for this sorting out process to occur. As Barnes notes it provides a basis from which pupils made leaps towards more interpretative or evaluative discussions.

D.W. Harding has suggested that for engagement with a work beyond this elementary level the reader must experience some empathy with the situations or characters presented:

> "To make a response to all this there must be imaginative insight into or empathy with, the experiences of other people, and a ready interest in watching or hearing about human events other than those we are ourselves experiencing at the moment." 6.

This imaginative insight, an interest in and willingness to share in the experiences of the characters in the story would appear to be the basis for talk at levels (i) and (ii) of Barnes, Churley and Thompson's model of talk about literature. In the groups already mentioned where the talk concentrated on plot details, the level of empathy appears to be low and the students do not respond at level (iii) and (iv). Barnes, Churley and Thompson suggest that responses at the first two levels were essential to discussion at the latter:

> "As adult readers, we find that in order to be able to discuss a novel as a self-subsistent entity we need in reading to have come at times much closer in sympathy to its characters, 'trying on' their experience for ourselves. For adolescent pupils, talk at the more direct and naive levels of response may well be a necessary preliminary to talk at the more distancing levels." 7.

Much of the talk in the classroom which we have tended to regard as irrelevant to the discussion of a text may be an expression of the development of an empathic relationship with the characters since students make meaning of the literature by relating it to events, situations and emotions in their previous experience. They may need to approach the work in this way before they can appreciate what is different in the experience offered by the text.

In the following comments from a Year 10 student we can see the student relating the experience of the story to her understanding of the world and moving towards what Harding terms an evaluative response to the work:

Cathy: I think that he probably was some sort of ally to the Germans, though it doesn't really fit with his character, because usually you think of German traitors as admiring Hitler, or whatever. If he (the traitor) was caught he would think it a great sacrifice. So he (Mr. Stowe) was probably only just a man who helped innocent people, who were Germans or something.

A similar process is apparent in the transcript of a Year 11 class. The teacher had asked the group to discuss whether "I Spy" showed the characteristics of a short story, and the connections between "I Spy" and other stories they had read.

S1: I reckon the best characteristic it's got that's most like other short stories is the way you're suddenly ah ... brought straight into the story from the very start the situation's just described - ah - there's no slow introduction.

S2: There's also the fact that it's written from the eyepoint of a little boy - everything's discussed without any-ah- just straight, straight as he saw it an - ah - describes everything as it came to him without ah prejudices or anything to what he saw.

S3: It seemed to be a real situation. You actually believed it happened unlike"The Tale of the Ragged Mountain"where you don't really think that. This seemed to be a situation you could understand and feel about rather than just being a story or fiction.

S4: Probably because it's the start of a story that happens in today's world because there are kids that sort of are oh not ... but ignored by their parents probably because of their jobs and things like that take their children away from ... takes them away from their children and they - ah - sort of other children left by themselves and that sort of ... and ignored by their parents.

S5: I think it's made believable by the fact that it's about a little boy whose peers are sort of knocking him because he doesn't smoke so that sort of takes you straight into the story and - ah - provides a stopping point ... yourself.

S6: ... kids at school stealing it from his father it's like sort of revolting against his father ...

The third speaker's comments suggest an empathic relationship with the story (and an interesting view of fiction!). His remarks are taken up by the fourth and fifth speakers whose comments suggest that their response to fiction is determined to some extent by the degree to which they can relate to the character and situation. Unless this empathy is present then the evaluative and critical responses we ask for may be the mouthings of empty phrases that our students have learned are the appropriate responses which one is expected to make to fiction.

When this group of students do move on to a genuine evaluative judgement of the text and an implicit recognition of the work as artefact, there is a definite sense that it has grown out of an imaginative engagement with the story:

> S: ... there's a new attitude to - towards things and people and come to learn a bit more about them ... He seems to think that he never loved his father had nothing to do with it, but when he saw him in a new light he seemed to respect him. He said at the end how he'd love to go down and say how much he loved him because of the new situation. It did change his attitudes.
>
> S: I reckon that - ah - change of attitude was a bit abrupt really because you were sort of stunned when he said that. There doesn't seem to be - it doesn't seem to - doesn't really explain why he changes his attitudes. I reckon it was a bit too quick a change. Now the story was complete in the fact that it told a complete story but there were still questions left in the reader's mind - about you know - why the kid's father was taken away and - ah - why he had a sudden change of attitude at the end.

Particularly with senior pupils, it is the distanced evaluative response which we have traditionally emphasised in the classroom, often without giving our students the opportunity to talk about their responses to the characters, to see the literature as relating to their own experience, to respond to the meaning of the story on an emotional level. 8.

In an unguided discussion of the story a group of College students move back and forth from talking about the story as if it were real life to a recognition of the story as artefact. Some of the students do not respond at the more distanced level, but the responses of those who do suggest a strong empathy with the characters and an imaginative entry into the situation. This is illustrated by the following extracts from the comments of one student:

> Michelle: And also, you know, they feel sorry for him, I think, because they sort of try and cheer him up, like, 'while there's life there's hope'. They know that he's going to get a hell of a time and so's his wife and family because they know the shop's going to be wrecked if his wife doesn't sell it and he's afraid to tell his wife because it's going to wreck their lives. Not just his life but also his wife and kid's. There's no hope.
>
> Michelle: It's good the way that in the beginning of the story the writer puts all those details and you think, 'well what's that got to do ...' you know, what they're doing in a short story where you have to only put in important things and then they also relate back. Like where it says that his mother had a love for everyone including the (inaudible) 'from the Vicar's wife to the dear Queen, except the Huns' and then later on we find out that the father was working for the Huns. We say, we really saw the contrast. Little details that you think, you know, what are they doing in a short story because short stories are so closely condensed. And then

later on bringing in the relevance.

To draw together the observations we have made in these analyses of the transcripts:

1. The "levels of talking about literature" were apparent over the range of the transcripts.

2. The majority of the talk of younger groups focused on "sorting things out" and was predominantly at levels (i) and (ii).

Implicit in the framework we adopted for our discussion of ways in which students talk about literature is the assumption that the mature response to literature is one where the student is distanced from an emotional involvement with the work. This is the position which prevails in most of our schools at senior levels and in most of our Colleges and Universities.

> "Adolescence is a period of stirring emotionalism, of deep shifts of affect, the discovery of passion and the embrace of commitment, of undying love of absolutes and total involvement. Does the English teacher reward expression of these? In the author's experience this is rarely the case. All of these states of consciousness appear in the curriculum particularly in connection with literature but the pupil is rewarded most strongly for his capacity to be objective towards them. As long as he can be aware of their existence with the relative detachment of an analyst and can handle such feelings as 'objects' for arrangement and comment, he receives the approval of his teacher. To be passionate himself in his expressive form results in approval only from a minority of teachers of English, and by the rest it is met with anything from bemused tolerance to positive discomfort." 9.

Although our syllabi in general state that we should encourage a personal response to the text, the form most often used to assess this response is that of the objectively written analytical essay that corresponds to levels (iii) and (iv) of talking about literature. Imaginative literary responses which we encourage at the junior levels of the school are rarely seen as appropriate in senior examination classes.

Put another way, most of us have assumed that discursive, analytical writing is the only legitimate mode of expression for an evaluative response to literature. This view was challenged by Margaret Spencer and other speakers at the conference and by members of the group. They argued that to tell a story or to write a poem was an equally valid evaluative response. It was a question which we did not, I feel, engage fully. Perhaps I am projecting my own uncertainties. Partly this was due to the limits on discussion imposed by the conference timetable but also I think because for many of us such a contention challenged long established ways of thinking about evaluative response and we needed to reflect and consider before deciding the question for ourselves. We tended to cite the limiting factors of syllabi and examinations but looking back on the session, I feel that this may have been a way of avoiding a real confrontation with the question.

This question is neatly posed by two pieces supplied by teachers as examples of Year 11 students' written responses to "I Spy". The first exercise is similar to those which all of us have set to elicit analytical responses which consider details of the story as artefact. The students were asked to consider the writer's use of language to convey mood or tone. The second piece was written in response to a suggestion that the students write a continuation and conclusion of the story.

i) "I SPY"

"but he did not love his father" para. 2 - this is one of the most vital statements of the story. It summarizes the mood of the situation before the climax of the story; the radical change. In just a few words we are given a direct indication of the feelings the boy feels as he is going to commit the crime. He feels no guilt due to no bond of love with his father. You tend to feel sorry for him and immediately picture his father as a 'bad' guy.

So the phrase is very influential as presenting a tone of friction, as well as sympathy.

"While there's life" and suddenly his father tried to laugh - para. 12 - this line is important because it makes you stop and think of the seriousness of his father's and thus his family's predicament. The mood of cheeriness, presented by the other man's encouragement, is suddenly replaced by tenseness, when he starts a sentence but the father cuts him off with an uneasy, forced laugh, as if he didn't want to hear the rest of the sentence and the implications it would have for him.

"Familiar photograph had stepped from the frame to reproach him..." - last para. - this phrase has many implications. However, I took it to be a total description of the feelings Charlie was experiencing. His father had, up until this recent transformation, been no more than a familiar photograph to him, no more personal that a distant, inanimate object. However after the change in respect Charlie realised he actually had towards his father, it seemed to him as if the photograph had stepped from its frame to pay attention to him. Even if this attention was only in the form of reproach, that was an improvement on the situation before.

ii) I SPY

Charlie Stowe's father walked briskly down the darkened streets between the two men. He could hear the waves breaking on the quiet shoreline and he wondered how long it would be before he would again smell the salty tang in the air which he had so long been accustomed to. The realization that he may never see any more of this small cosy town struck him momentarily and a cold chill ran through his body. As the silent trio moved through the streets he began to notice things which he had never seen before like Mrs. Higgin's window box filled with struggling flowers. Charlie's father was beginning to wonder how he could possibly take so many things for granted, when even though they were insignificant little details, they were to be the basis of his memories of the little town for the remainder of his days. These thoughts caused another involuntary shudder to tremble through his body and even though the walking pace was brisk he

> pulled his coat tighter around himself as if to shut out the cold ache in his bones.
>
> The three men had to halt their journey momentarily to pass through a security check point. One particular soldier was from the town itself and Charlie's father had noticed the obvious laughing sneer that appeared on the boy's face. He also caught a few faint words as they passed on "traitor... about time ... shame ...".
>
> When he had at first become entangled in the business of selling information to the enemy it had been to provide his family with the necessities of life. It was true that there were those who were worse off than the Stowes, but Mr. Stowe was a proud man which all the township realized and often mistook for smugness. It was in a way a relatively harmless crime as the "Huns" had no immediate desire to come ashore in this particular coastal town. With a stab of painful realization he knew that his wife and son would feel so ashamed of him. He couldn't even bear to face up to them when he left.
>
> A haunting feeling came over him which caused him to bite into his lip to stop himself from laughing aloud. Yes, honourable Mr. Stowe, he thought, you won't see this little town any more. With luck my life will end before I have to face anyone close to me.
>
> Feeling a little more at ease with himself he fell into step with his two captors and took out a cigarette.
>
> \- Lesley

Is the second piece in the creative, literary mode, equally valid as an evaluative response to literature? Each of us must answer this question for himself/herself.

Whether or not we accepted that the student's own expressive writing is a valid evaluative response to literature, we were all convinced of the importance of creative writing for the student as a means by which he shapes and orders his experience of the world. We accepted the view formulated by James Britton that the works we traditionally think of as literature and the creative writing of the student are on the same continuum. As Britton states, "the principal difference between the work of gifted writers - literature - and the spectator role writing of the less gifted young, will lie in their differing ability to handle linguistic forms and control the effects of formal arrangements." 10. We agreed that a response to literature that we must foster is the child's own creative writing. The written pieces provided by teachers suggest that such attitudes are already widespread in the schools. The following pieces were student's responses to the story.

> The morning was a clammy wet one and the mist seemed to hang around like a wet, white sheet that had been blown over them by the wind so they couldn't see a foot ahead of them.
>
> Suddenly the big dark horrible building loomed ahead of them. It was surrounded by a tall barbed-wire fence with a strong locked gate guarded by two uniformed men with guns.

They gave in their identity card and walked slowly towards section B. Charlie could feel his mother's hand trembling in his and he heard his voice saying, "It'll be good to see dad again." His mum did not answer.

The silence was strange and in fact the only noise they could hear was two prisoners arguing at the end of the corridor and their own footsteps.

The guard led them to room 23 and unlocked the door.

"Fred", Mrs. Stowe said slowly.

"Oh. It's good to see you, this place is horrible. Will you forgive me and take me back when I come out of prison?"

"Of course", Mrs. Stowe said quickly.

"Hi dad", said Charlie. He knew his voice was unsteady but he couldn't help it.

He looked at his mother. Her eyes were red and her mouth quivered, Charlie knew she was going to cry.

Suddenly she burst into tears.

"Now don't turn on the water works", Charlie's father said in his usual cold manner.

Charlie suddenly felt upset. Tears pricked his eyes but he held them back. It was good to see his father after not seeing him for 3 months, and only now he realized how much he had missed him.

On the train on the way home he tried to work out his muddled thoughts. He hated his father he really did, and this was because he had been a spy and had always hated and punished him for very small things. But yet he loved his father dearly, he really did. He did not know why after all the bad things he had done to him, he just did.

That morning when they had set out he did not want to go, but now he was glad that he did. It had made him understand his father more.

- Year 7.

A WORLD DISSOLVES

Down the stairs
I stepped heavily.
The stairs didn't creak
so loudly
in the daylight.

Bronze sunlight streamed through the small,
smeary window.

Dappled patterns flickered on the floor.

           The shop was shut.

           The curtains drawn.

The tobacco smell had vanished overnight.

The cigarettes were packed into boxes on the floor.

A bucket of cold, dark, brown, soapy water
stood still in a glassy puddle.

The shelves were bare and clean.

           I felt empty.

           I felt small.

SPIED

I heard them
  oh I heard them
            alright
And I lived a
  sterile, waiting autumn
                    until their winter steps
would chill the sleeted cobbles
to black-booted ice
                    outside my window.

I have lived a thousand
       of these nights - in dream
                           - in fear
This is only an echo, I say,
             in another lost night of pretence, I plead.

They will say,
  oh I know they
           will say
He is taken - the traitor!
                 and they will fill their eyes with me
                         in pity and resentment
                                 and uncertain hate.

My son will ask for meanings
                         - which I cannot give
                    answers
                         - which I must not
And he will begin to see the world
       out of the focus of my eyes
       and into the misted love and hate
                                of his lost father's.

I heard them
  oh I heard them leave
            alright
while the search beams swept my room
                      and crossed by counterpane
                          a hundred empty times.

- Kim, College student.

Such approaches will enable the student to see the relationship between his own writing and that of published authors as he struggles to give shape and form to his own perceptions of people and events. In the three pieces reproduced here, we see an expression not only of the students' empathy with the characters and understanding of the story, but also of their own development of literary form. These are only examples of forms such responses may take. Other examples are the writing of drama, radio, film or television scripts; the dramatisation of scenes from plays and novels; improvised drama role play; the dramatic reading of poems or plays; the setting of poetry to a musical accompaniment; the preparation of a visual comment using painting, photographic collage; recreation of the scene in a novel from the viewpoint of different characters; the recreation of a scene from a different period in a contemporary setting and idiom. Each of these responses involves the student creatively in an engagement with the text which will enhance his understanding of literature at the levels of meaning and form.

The following statements reflect some of the conclusions we reached from our analysis of the transcripts of student discussion, our consideration of the written response to "I Spy" and our discussions of our reactions to the conference speakers.

Firstly we recognise that the reader's response is a personal one and that different readers will respond differently to different texts. We need to encourage our students to read widely, to offer not only books we choose, but to give them the opportunity to choose books for themselves While we will engage in a close reading of the text with the whole class, we will also provide opportunities for individually chosen wide reading. We agreed that we need to provide time in school for the student to pursue this reading and several teachers reported that their schools had instituted a policy where teachers and students alike engaged in silent reading for a set period each day.

We recognise the need to choose texts that are meaningful for the student, rather than meaningful for us. Texts which enable the students to empathise with the characters, to put themselves in their positions, to relate the concerns of the novel to significant factors in their own lives, will make literature a meaningful and rewarding experience for them. We should institute in our classrooms talk and activities which encourage such responses. This does not mean an insistence on a narrow concept of what is 'relevant' for the students. Literature of the past or of other cultures may be equally relevant on an emotional or intellectual level to the concerns of our students today, but we may need to discover ways in which to lead them to this realization.

We see the above stage as a necessary prelude to a critical evaluative response to the text and believe that to require the latter response too soon may stifle the personal response of the student and make the reading of literature a sterile and unrewarding task, destroying the delight in and valuing of literature we all seek to encourage.

We agreed we must recognise that the culture of our students cannot be ignored in our consideration of literature and that their culture is in many cases vastly different from our own. Whilst it has its own local and national characteristics it is also international in scope. Its literary forms include oral narratives, folk songs, playground rhymes, pop songs, film, television, comics and popular novels as well as the works traditionally regarded as literature. The responses that the student makes to this literature form the basis from which he will develop into a mature and discriminating reader and viewer. We were concerned with the manipulative and commercial aspects of much popular culture but believe that the way to combat such forces is not to ignore them but to lead our students to an understanding of their forms and of the values they uphold.

The preceeding observations were the basis for the general statement, prepared by Ian Reid in the Friday morning session, and endorsed by the group, which was presented to the Commission as a whole:

> We believe that during the 1980's the study of literature in English courses needs to free itself from some of the traditionally restrictive implications of both terms, English and Literature.
>
> Teachers must give fuller practical recognition to the fact that their students' verbal constructions of experience - writing, reading, talking, listening - now inevitably and quite properly occur in cultural contexts so complex, varied and inclusive as to demand a continual process of revision of curriculum content at every opportunity.
>
> We urge English teachers to work towards greater flexibility in their syllabuses, particularly in the following directions:
>
> 1. More integration of creative writing and critical inquiry so that the former is seen to be of central importance for all students rather than an optional extra for some.
>
> 2. More interdisciplinary range at all levels of schooling, transcending what is artifical in the administrative boundaries of certain prescribed subject disciplines.
>
> 3. More socio-cultural variety in choice of texts, especially popular fiction, recorded oral narrative, songs etc., alongside the products of high art.
>
> 4. More international scope, including, where appropriate, and with due regard for the problems, literature in translation. English is the language in which our studies are undertaken, but the writing and related materials for study may be brought from beyond any given confines of nationality.

And so we enter the 80's.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Barnes, D., Churley, P. and Thompson,C."Group Talk and Literary Response", English in Education, pp. 63-76.

2 Ibid., p.74.

3 Blackie, P. "Asking Questions", English in Education, Vol. 5, 1975 pp. 77-96.

4 Barnes et al., p.75.

5 Barnes et al., p.74.

6 Harding, D.W. "Considered Experience: The Invitation of the Novel", in A. Wilkinson (ed.), English in Education, Vol.2, Summer 1967.

7 Barnes et al., p.78.

8 Barnes et al., p.76.

9 Witkin, R. The Intelligence of Feeling, Heinemann, p.59.

10 Britton, J. Language and Learning, p.104.

DECENTERING ABSTRACTIONS : OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Judy Parker (AUSTRALIA)

Through literature man attempts to make sense of his experiences, that kaleidoscope of impressions, feelings, sensations, events which constitute his daily life. Man, the pattern-making animal, shapes his amorphous experiences and makes possible the processes of contemplation, reflection and evaluation in seeking to flesh out knowledge of himself, his attitudes and beliefs in relation to other people and the world in which he lives.

At the Conference we reaffirmed our view that English in the eighties would not just be about teaching children to read and write so that they could become merely efficient cogs in a commercial enterprise. Some of us would agree with Peter Abbs that English teaching is in danger of becoming threatened by the utilitarian and pedestrian purposes of the functionalists and the bureaucrats whose view of education would discard the truths of the imagination for competence in mechanical skills for routine processes. 1. The carving out and shaping of individual meanings should not become secondary to the pursuit of social significance and verifiable facts.

Implicit in so many of our discussions, whether we met as a full seminar group or as a small group of four or five people examining transcripts of lessons on "I Spy", was our commitment to involve our students with the "pressing, though strangely elusive questions which characterize our deeper humanity: such questions as Who am I? How should I live?" 2. and to provide them, through the materials and methods we use, with a framework which encourages reflection, contemplation and imaginative insight.

Commitment, then, to literature we were all agreed upon. Its significance in our own lives and those of our students we were happy to talk about in a gentle, meandering fashion. But when it came to what materials we should use and what methods would best accomplish our purposes, then the gentle meanderings became spirited, not to say heated, debates.

Who chooses what books? What criteria inform the choice? These were two questions we seemed to return to throughout our deliberations. We were aware that we had unlocked Pandora's box yet again and that maybe we were straying from the central issue of our commission. But then we would argue that any conference should challenge our comfortable assumptions and force us to make public both to ourselves and others, for mutual inspection, the principles which guide our teaching. We may discover unfortunately that our principles are really only prejudices or at best intuitions which need teasing out if we are going to contribute fruitfully to the role of English in the Eighties, to the direction English teaching might take in this decade. On the other hand, we may find that our beliefs are firmly rooted in the best of current theory and practice and that we can answer with something other than 'lofty conviction', the charges of 'the back to basics' movement and employer groups, for example, who assert that students are no longer taught to read and write with the same emphasis that they once were.

When one group member wrote:

> "....It is comforting to realize that other folk are struggling to come to terms with the task of teaching English. At times I wonder if I ever will come to anything like a satisfactory theoretical understanding (of my task)..." (Col)

he aptly identified the feelings of us all.

The question of what books should be chosen first arose in our discussions of Ted Hughes' poem "February". "I wouldn't give that to my students" said one person, thereby immediately inviting one of us to reply "Why not?". The argument, passionately presented, was that far too much literature given to students these days depicted the unlovely, often the unsavoury aspects of modern life. Couldn't we find something to soothe, not startle, something which applauded the heroic deeds of mankind rather than wallowed in his demise. But then others argued, equally passionately, taking up Mary Q. Steele's point that:

> "The world has not spared children hunger, cold, sorrow, pain, fear, loneliness, disease, death, war, famine or madness. Why should we hesitate to make use of this knowledge when writing for them." 3.

It was back in the sixties that John Dixon in Growth Through English criticised what he termed "the cultural heritage model" for the teaching of English, a model emphasising "the need for a civilizing and socially unifying content". 4. The content was supplied by a number of "great books", the classics of the English tradition. It is too easy, and perhaps too comforting for many English teachers, disciples of the personal growth model, to dismiss as elitist and outmoded, the arguments of those who feel "the great books" have often been too summarily and too enthusiastically banished from the syllabus. Certainly "the great books" (and there would be disagreement over which books were entitled to such an accolade) explore the human condition in an imaginatively exciting and intellectually complex manner and we sense, often only partially, the author's struggles to communicate their own deeply felt truths about the way man should live. Adherents to "the great books" tradition would say that they present us with the best of what was thought and felt by writers of the past; it is a way of keeping in touch with our national heritage. One of our members wrote:

> "We give little consideration to the attitudes of many parents who care about their children's literary studies ... many parents think their children are cheated when they do not study at least some of the accepted classics in their secondary schooling."

When our discussions led us to the questions of what books are chosen and why, we were pushed into reconsidering a number of fundamental issues which have continued to plague English teachers since Dartmouth - and it would seem that they are going to plague us throughout the eighties as well. We agreed that the confusions we felt could be worthwhile: we will ask more questions; we won't be satisfied with slogans for answers; we won't be seduced by conference bonhomie and exhilaration (not that we would wish to undervalue that). But confusion can also be debilitating: the pressures of examinations, large classes, marking, next year's book orders, may mean that we cling to our truths of yesteryear, failing to make a personal synthesis, a workable reconciliation of contradictory points of view.

The pre-conference reading material and the lectures provided by our commission during the conference shed some light, even if they only shone through the pall dimly. Maybe they posed more questions than they answered. We were reminded that the cultural traditions of so many of our students is very different from that which gave rise to "the great books". It is not very hard to argue that the lives of Jane Austen's characters would fail to engage in any real way with the lives of some of our students in the isolated, outback areas of New South Wales. We should acknowledge the variety, the diversity and the richness of our students' cultural traditions by finding books which have something worthwhile to say to them about their here and now, their preoccupations, their aspirations. And not in any condescending and patronising manner either.

Why do we want to teach children to read literature? So that they will come to know that it is enjoyable, that it can open up exciting places wherein to spend their leisure. In Fader's words we want to 'hook' children on to books. It could be that some of our practices are guaranteed to turn our students off books and a very significant way in which we might do this is to force feed them a diet of "great books" which are either intellectually too complex or emotionally too demanding thereby demonstrating that reading is an unrewarding, unsatisfying activity.

It may well be that our teacher training - for most of us a university degree in English followed by a Diploma of Education - did not really adequately equip us to teach secondary school students from sometimes widely differing cultural backgrounds. Although there has been for the last twenty years a wealth of books written especially for adolescents, universities have made little attempt to include courses about children's literature in their undergraduate programme. (This isn't to say that there has not been some controversy about whether there is a need for books written especially for adolescents. But Aidan Chambers and John Rowe Townsend have both argued convincingly for the value of lively books about "modern life" (Chambers' phrase) for young people, books which can engage them in an emotionally honest way with the realities of their own lives.)

Of course, the universities can rightly claim that it isn't their task to fit undergraduate degree courses to the needs of would-be secondary school teachers. But then again it just might. At least there should be room for dialogue. One of our members wrote:

> "Another matter which concerned me was that there was little or no representation of teachers of English at Universities, not only from Australia but other countries... English teachers in Secondary Schools during their undergraduate years pass through the universities and must be affected by the courses they did, and they will probably hear a different approach to their subject in their teacher training. This must be difficult for them as they have to adopt one line or another in their teaching or be divided or vacillating in their approach."

More questions. What characterizes the approaches of University departments to the teaching of English? To what extent are their approaches different from those departments in Universities or Colleges of Advanced Education where students complete their Diploma in Education courses? Perhaps this is the point where the apparent control of some University English departments over the texts which are set for public examination need to be debated. At least, it is important that teachers in the secondary school should know the basis on which certain texts are chosen.

But as that same group member continued:

> "I do not think the answer is to dismiss or heap scorn on the University Schools."

Rather it lies in rational discussions by University and secondary school teachers of their attitudes and approaches to the teaching of English. It may also be that the training of secondary school teachers needs to be an integrated one; that is, one where the study of literature and the study of approaches to the teaching of literature are considered concurrently over a four year course.

To return now, less tangentially, to -

Who chooses literature?

Why?

Margaret Spencer, Geoffrey Summerfield, John Dixon reminded us each in their own way, that literature is not just "the great books" of the past nor is it modern children's books of the last twenty years. It is both of these but a lot more as well. Literature grows out of our natural urge to tell stories. Further, in telling stories we are not just talking to someone else to amuse, entertain maybe even frighten them for we are recording and savouring the experience for ourselves - and in the process making sense of the experience.

> "Storying is the most significant way we explain how we come to be where we are, and a universal language habit that transcends all cultural barriers."
>
> (Margaret Spencer, The Cool Web, p. 8) 5.

James Britton, after Sapir, would say that man comes to handle his world by making representation of it symbolically through language (although neither Sapir nor Britton would say that language is the only symbolic system man draws on to represent reality as he experiences it). These representations make it possible for him to understand his world and to "operate" within it (to use Britton's phrase). But man also operates directly on the representation itself, perhaps by changing the order of events that occurred to make a more pleasing pattern or to allow him to cope more readily with the experience. When we operate directly upon the representation we take up the role of a spectator, standing back from the experience, delighting in it maybe, reflecting upon it, ultimately evaluating it. When we write in the spectator role, Britton would say we are writing literature. So, the child's stumbling efforts to write poetry and T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" emerge from the same process. The child's poem is not so complex, lacks the imaginable depth, the profundity of feeling of "Four Quartets" but it is a point on the same continuum.

Some members of our group were anxious that in accepting such a definition of literature we were bestowing on children's writing a status it did not deserve. On the other hand, the merits of such a definition are that it may help our students, and us, to see that their own writing and that of published authors are part of the same process of making sense of experience through shaping it and giving it form. This is arguably what Gillian (Year 11) has done in choosing to write what she has in response to "I Spy":

The poem is "The Ward"

I gaze through double glass windows
Past silhouetted machinery
And see nothing
Do nothing

I have a nurse,
She feeds me
She washes me
She walks for me
She smiles for me
- but in disguised pity
For there is no love

They gave me TV
And many books -
But my eyes were dimming grey
A uselsss -
But I am deaf.
Companions -
But I am gibberingly dumb

Sterility is white.
The nurse's' shoes are white,
So are their uniforms,
So are my last few prickly strands,
Solitary spikes.

Happy Birthday!
A bright jumper from a sparking grandchild
But I am bleached
Drained, dripped dry
Of youth.
Old and alone.

Gillian.

Do we exclude the study of the media from the classroom because it lies outside the scope of traditional literary studies? It would seem almost irresponsible to do so. That piece of electronic equipment, flashing images before our eyes, accompanied by seductive, strident melodies, is perhaps the most all-persuasive maker of culture in our society. And what kind of values are applauded? Those of a consumer who desires nothing more than to ricochet from one superficially exciting experience to another. If I am a woman I stand on the sidelines smiling alluringly whilst my mate aggressively asserts his individuality in games of cricket and football. And when I find the pressure of my life-style too demanding

I can always 'shake hands with a cold gold tinny'. My friends are only beautiful people who smoke sophisticated brands of cigarettes, wear the latest fashions and drive the best cars. I should save my money to holiday at exotic, prestige resorts. And, I should remember that 'love is a diamond ring'. To examine what values the television (in particular) upholds and the way in which it upholds them, may lead our students to some understanding of its manipulative power. Who was it who said that we want our students to be able to operate in the environment, not be victims of it!

It would be remiss of this report to neglect some explanation and analysis of what happened when we met to examine the transcripts of our students' discussions about "I Spy" and their written responses to it. Some of us felt rather cheated that in the end so little time was left to share our thoughts about our lessons, our students' written and oral responses. Further, we had hoped that the Literature Commission as a whole might have been able to have reached some tentative conclusions about the nature of response itself and what we were hoping for students to achieve at various levels in the secondary schools, conclusions which could be the basis for further exploration and research. Well, a fluttering candle, at least, to shed some light on the direction of our teaching for the eighties.

To make Tuesday morning manageable, we decided to work in three small groups which still left us something like five extracts of transcripts and ten pieces of writing to read and comment upon. As a final task, we (each small group) attempted a synthesis of our reactions to a series of questions set by the Commission leader concerning the kind of responses we most valued from our students and what role the teacher has in developing such responses. All this in three hours .... Now for yet another synthesis .... well a summary of our deliberations... and only to some of the questions.

1. What kind of critical judgement do we expect and admire? At what age?

At all ages we value and welcome the honest felt responses of our students: those responses which are genuine, exploratory attempts to make the literature work for them. We hope that the environment of the classroom is one of 'safety and freedom' where students are prepared to offer responses tentatively, moving back and forth from the text to personal experience as a means of adding to their understanding of the significance of each.

That is, in terms of Douglas Barnes' et al "levels of talking about literature" (in Group Talk and Literature Response, one of the articles we were asked to read before the conference) we look for the students being able "to put (themselves) in the character's position (and) treat the characters as if they were real". Or in Harding's terms, we want students to have some empathy with the characters by appreciating, through imaginative insight, the characters' reactions and feelings, the elements which make up their world.

It is J.W.P. Creber (in Sense and Sensitivity) who argues forcefully and persuasively for English teaching to concern itself with a rigorous concept of the imagination, that "power by which one human being enters into the mind and circumstance of another". 6. Particularly at the secondary school stage, our students, Creber suggests, become much more vividly aware of and interested in the behaviour of other people, and an analysis of the transcripts of each sub-group would bear testimony to this assertion. Students want to know about Charlie, his relationship with his parents, his changing attitudes towards his father. They even wonder what might happen to Charlie when he recognizes the nature of the crime his father had committed. We value their developing sense of a "reciprocity of viewpoint", a predisposition to enter imaginatively into the attitudes and values of other people whose experience of the world may be different from their own.

We would seek to draw upon the students' empathy for the fictional characters, by encouraging them to evaluate the reactions and the behaviour of these characters by standing back as it were and seeing them as an author's creation. Whilst most of the students whose talk about "I Spy" we considered were willing to express varying degrees of empathy for Charlie, few illustrated their detached evaluative response of Charlie, a character in a Graham Greene story. There is the implication here that the imaginative empathic response is at a lower level than the detached evaluative one. In being able to evaluate the behaviour of a character, his attitudes and values, we are ultimately deepening our awareness and understanding of the motivations of other people.

If we read what Suzie (Year 11) has to say about the ending of "I Spy" we get a real sense of someone being able to evaluate what Charlie does and the way Greene continues the pattern of the story. Part of what another student, Denise, says, is included also.

Denise : .. He'd only just realised he was like his father - not got any real love for him as a man, I don't think.

Suzie : I think that's the point of the story, to end it there, so that you do think that there's regret and I think it would have spoilt it if you'd gone any further, because it leaves you wondering and lets you apply it to yourself and think "What sort of situation have I been in?" and then you can finish off your own story and say what you did to rectify it.

It would seem important to point out at this stage that students need to be willing to enter into the imaginative life of the story before they can be expected to evaluate what has happened. In the following extract we see Suzie empathising with Charlie, in a sense making the story and the characters her own.

Suzie : It's even in your thoughts like...when you're very young and you might be taking a cake or something you're not meant to have out of the kitchen, you still have the same kind of guilt and "He's looking at me" and..(Laughter)

Teacher : And so it's a childish thing.

Suzie : I think that little story about him going downstairs it's kind of a story within the story because there are real stories about how he wished he told his father that he loved him. I think that...I find that closer to home because I was thinking that I wish I could turn back and say things which I haven't said ...when people are going away or something.

We were not only asked to set out what kinds of critical judgement we expected and admired from our students but we were also asked to indicate "at what age?". Only one sub-group were prepared to venture an opinion in suggesting that in Years 11 and 12, we should be encouraging students to understand the inherent patterns of literature, a sense of form in other words. (James Britton would say that "Development (of critical judgement, that is) can best be described as an increasing sense of form".)

We should say that we do not believe that students' responses to literature and indeed their enjoyment of it, can develop in any real way unless they are encouraged to read widely, not just books we choose for them but also those they select for themselves.

Peter Dickinson is worth listening to on this point:

> "I am convinced of the importance of children discovering things for themselves. However tactfully an adult may push them towards discoveries in literature, these do not have quite the treasure trove of value of the books picked up wholly by accident. This can only be done by random sampling on the part of children, and it is inevitable that a high proportion of what they read will be rubbish by any standard. But in the process they will learn the art of comparison and subconsciously acquire critical standards so that in the world they are discovering - even in the world of football comics - they will begin to work out why one strip is 'better' than another and seems more fascinating and is more eagerly looked forward to than another. They may even argue about this with their friends and so make the beginning of an effort at rationalizing their appreciation or dislike of cultural objects.
>
> But I am fairly sure in my mind that a diet of plums is bad for you, and that any rational reading system needs to include a considerable amount of pap or roughage - call it what you will. I know very few adults who do not have some secret cultural vice, and they are all the better for it. I would instantly suspect an adult if all of those cultural activities were high, remote and perfect."
>
> ("In Defence of Rubbish", in Writers, Critics and Children, 7.
> Geoff Fox (ed.))

2. Are some methods of eliciting response open to criticism?

Students often have their own questions to ask about a text, questions which, in our too strict adherence to a pre-determined lesson plan, we may dismiss summarily leaving the questions unanswered and the student baffled.

We were reminded by Barnes et al ("Group Talk and Literary Response") and Penny Blackie ("Asking Questions") that students need to sort out for themselves details about the plot and the factual relationships between characters before they can begin to interpret the story imaginatively and sensitively. We may often discourage questions about what happened next, for instance, because it seems too elementary; it is not a question which will lead the students to those aspects of the story that we consider to be most important.

It is rather interesting that one teacher felt it necessary to apologise to the other members of his sub-group for asking his students to explain "I Spy" in terms of what happened and who were the characters involved in the events.

We wondered, too, whether we were unrealistic in coaxing responses from our students about each piece of literature we bring into the classroom. Perhaps we should recognize more readily that we often need time to allow literature to make its own impact, to work its way to the surface of our consciousness from where we can begin to articulate our responses. Some of us found reading "February" and "Welsh Incident" and then being expected to offer a response, an altogether daunting task (especially given, at that stage, our very sparse knowledge of the kinds of people who made up our group). "A poem will be read to you. Now respond." Do we run the risk of endorsing superficial and unreflective thinking, encouraging students to play our games, jump through our hoops, rather than carve out understanding for themselves?

3. Which of our classroom strategies and attitudes can encourage a narrow conforming response?

We were sure that we did not want to be a teacher who -

> "... is a sort of benevolent sheep dog to the children's (ideas), marshalling (them) and ordering (them) through gates and safely into the fold which has been waiting for it all the time." 8.
>
> (with apologies to C. & H. Rosen, The Language of Primary School Children, p.52)

For in bringing them to an acceptance of our interpretation of a story, for instance, we sometimes fail to listen to what they have to say and so neglect one of our important functions which is to tease out their responses towards a finer appreciation of the density and richness of the story. As one of our sub-groups wrote:

> "... It (classroom discussions of literature) is a listening and learning experience for everyone ..."

And we may be amazed, exhilarated even, if we can take the time to listen to what our students have to say. In large classes it is often difficult for the teacher to take up the variety and diversity of responses students offer but perhaps if we occasionally talked to each student individually about his reading we could overcome this problem.

Two English teachers, one in England, Jean Blunt ("Response to Reading : How some young describe the process", English in Education, Autumn, 1977) and one here in Australia, Jack Thomson ("Response to Reading : the process as described by one fourteen year old", English in Education, Autumn, 1979) set up the conditions that allowed them to talk to individual students. Their descriptions and analysis of their respective projects are illuminating: they demonstrate that given time and someone genuinely interested in their point of view, students can articulate in a very explicit way the effect literature has had on their thinking and feeling. It may be that these kinds of interviews will eventually help us to talk more precisely about what happens when we read literature and its relationship with the way we come to view the world.

We recognized, too, that there would always be students who would find difficulty in articulating their responses to literature. Again, we were conscious that often in our enthusiasm to encourage students to talk we forget that silence may also be eloquent. We wondered too whether some students remained silent because they perceived that there was an acceptable language in which responses to literature was couched and that they did not possess it. In other words, it may sometimes seem to students that knowledge of the jargon of literary criticism is often valued more than stumbling efforts to express reactions tentatively.

We believe that imposing literary-critical evaluative responses on our students too early is destructive of honest felt responses. But the kinds of questions which senior students are required to answer in public examinations are ones which demand a detached evaluative response. Teachers quite rightly feel a sense of responsibility to their examination students and so in the interests of helping them to do well they often find themselves directing discussions, and essay questions, which ask the students to consider the literary work as object at the expense of encouraging the students to enter imaginatively into the life of the text and from that position begin the process of evaluation.

There were some of us particularly from New South Wales who felt that we should attempt to open up negotiations with those responsible for the setting of examination papers. Why is it that certain kinds of questions are considered more valuable or appropriate? What are we assessing anyway? Is it that evaluative responses are the only real indicators of students' involvement with and appreciation for literature? And is the traditional literary-critical analytical essay the only form an evaluative response can take anyway?

It would doubtless be a very revealing exercise to ask those responsible for setting examination questions, what judgement they would pass on one of our member's response to "Welsh Incident". It certainly does not resemble the traditional, time-honoured way of analysing a poem. Yet doesn't it reveal the very qualities of involvement and engagement, imaginative insight and reflective evaluation, that we would applaud in our students' responses?

"Welsh Incident" ..... continued ....

'What did the mayor do?'
'I was coming to that.

'He asked an alderman, a young lad from Pwllheli,
to invite the sea creatures to approach the platform.
Young Williams stammered across the sand
With his gowns tucked under his elbows
and all of us cheering him on.
He looked back once at our windy faces
and started to say something.
His mouth definitely uttered a bubble of air.
The mayor urged him forward with a wave of his hand,
but the creatures were already on the water's edge.
Williams seemed to lose a little interest
as the water lapped against his polished shoes,
and then another sound...

'What sort of sound?'
'Something like sunlight
shining on sea, or wheat wavering in the wind
seemed to envelop him, turn and spin him.'

'What do you mean?'

'His hair changed colour, or seemed to.
He reached out to us
as though he was inviting us to follow,
and the creatures stirred the water into mist,
and the afternoon light changed green,
and Williams just, well, evaporated...

'Didn't anyone search for him?'
'I was coming that.'

Gordon Shrubb /18 August 1980.

Perhaps we could think again about what Piaget has to say about secondary school students. He would argue that they are not only turning to the world of people but to the world of ideas as well. He says that they begin to construct for themselves theories about the way things are, the nature of society and they hypothesise about the way things might be. But importantly, according to Piaget, their theories are not free from a new kind of egocentrism, that is, their theories are intimately connected with the way they see themselves and the roles they are shaping for themselves.

Could we not argue then for the unique place of literature in helping to decentre the adolescents' abstractions; for the power of its spell in drawing us into the lives of others whose view of the way society is constructed is different from ours? Maybe decentring comes about as we coax adolescents towards a reciprocity of viewpoint. In considering another world-view imaginatively recreated in a novel for instance, are we not forced to reconsider, perhaps modify, certainly evaluate our own stances. Could it be that in standing outside our own egocentricity, we not only know clearly who we are but equally significantly who is the other?

FOOTNOTES

1. P. ABBS (1976), Root and Blossom, London, Heinemann Educational, p.2.

2. ibid., p.9.

3. MARY Q. STEELE (1971), "Realism, Truth and Honesty" in The Horn Book, February, 1971, p.20.

4. J. DIXON (1967), Growth Through English, London, Oxford University Press, p.1.

5. M. MEEK et al (1977), The Cool Web, London, Bodley Head, p.5.

6. J.W.P. CREBER (1965), Sense and Sensitivity, London University Press, p.16 quoting J.S. Mill.

7. P. DICKINSON (1970), "A Defence of Rubbish" in C.Fox (ed.) (1976), Writers, Critics and Children, London, Heinemann Educational, p.75.

8. C. & H. ROSEN (1973), The Language of Primary School Children, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p.52.

GIVING VOICE

Peter Moss (AUSTRALIA)

Group four initially demonstrated the main tension of the past decade as far as the ways that the profession views the teaching of literature. Put broadly, this is made clear in the difference between the view which expects a work of literature to 'be' something and the view which expects it to 'lead' somewhere. Auden's dictum makes the point succinctly :

> "Poetry makes nothing happen".

In other words, poetry (for which, read imaginative literature) is about the sensibility not the will.

The tension, perhaps dichotomy is a better word, was revealed during the first day's work, the discussions about the poems of Hughes, Nemerov and Graves. The different ways-of-looking can be seen in the following comments made by members of the group :

(i) "I began on the cerebral level - I read the poem piecing the cues (sic) together assuming that a synthesis was desirable and necessary ... so the 'poem as puzzle' got into full swing." (Discussing 'February')

(ii) "I am impressed by this poem's unwillingness to reveal all its meaning to me in some fixed and finite form. (I wonder how justified we are in seeking in any work of literature a meaning, that might limit our response to that work both now and in the future.) I 'saw' the poem vividly, the images not only echoed and recalled my past experiences, impressions and feelings but forced me to consider the unexpected new experiences that it was trying to present : My responses to this poem and where it leads me ... are uncertain, still subject to change, moderation, review. The test of a poem, I feel, is how (whether?) it will offer up new meaning, new insight on re-reading." (Discussing 'February')

Perhaps a more meaningful representation of the dichotomy is in the following extract from a third participant. I find this helpful because it states the tension consciously, and it is the consciousness of a concerned intelligence.

"As a teacher, I recognized that this poem is about coldness. I recognized that coldness because I have been schooled to ask about what a work says; why it says what it says and how it says what it says. If I were not scheduled to ask these questions what would the poem say to me? Would the images speak to me immediately? Would the fairy tales return to remind me of a world where all sorts of hunger may be satisfied if one is cold (or "hot") enough?"

"This problem I now face is one of bringing a poem of this sort into the classroom and just letting it happen. Will the questions my group formulate let it happen?"

"(What do you see?
Where does the poem come from?
Where does the poem take you?)!!"
(Discussing 'February').

These three statements neatly represent the old product/process debate.

It is an indication of the tolerance and intellectual openness of the group that these differences of view-point around the 'fact of literature' did not harden into a sterile polarity. Indeed, by the end of the conference something approaching a general consensus had been achieved. What was encouraging about this consensus was that central positions were still retained but new meeting-points were gained. How this came about, the process, can not be explained in a synthetic report of this kind but what the consensus produced will give some idea of how a period of intense professional co-operation can be productive, given good-will. Significantly, and appropriately, the common ground was reached on a practical issue the teaching of Graham Greene's story "I spy". What follows is a guiding process for this particular story.

TEACHING "I SPY".

1. There must be time to reflect because the story is short but concentrated. The students should be given at least a day to think about it in their own ways.

2. In the first class meeting the story should be read aloud to point up its tone. There is a danger here in that such a pointing might place a barrier between the story and the response but it is a necessary risk because an experienced and committed reading (committed, that is, to another's words) is important for adolescents.

3. The class could then be assigned to groups where they might try out their own voices at reading the story to one another; leading to the asking of questions of one another; producing answers for one another and, on important matters, for the class.

   This Conference-group agreed that this 'workshop' approach is a fine way to begin but there is a case to be made, also for the teacher to lead. The teacher after all has a wisdom gained from past experience, a certain skill that comes from practice! Aspects which students do not see or hear or feel now become the teacher's responsibility.

For one member of the group this teacher-led response took the following form :

"... If kids do not see a love story in 'I SPY' I should like to point the way by asking, 'Would you like to have a dad like the dad in this story?' I want to give them a chance to tell the story back, but I want them to see that narration is capable also of generalisation, that a story may be about something which the reader cannot see at first. I want them to have the power to generalise from their experience. (Always I want the search for what is beneath.) The generalisation which Greene makes is, I think, not too hard to achieve and it is a generalisation which speaks of the here and now.

I believe that the teacher can point, even direct, can even be centre-stage, just as he can retire from the field and let things happen (from which leisure he, too, will be instructed). For, if the teacher is not running the show in both instances, call him what you will - resource person, facilitator, listener, counsellor - who needs him? Let him leave the room eternally ... I do believe that every time a work is revealed, a formula explained, we get some of the fire from the gods".

4. There may be sense in asking the class whether the work being read and discussed is a story. There is a challenge for pedagogy in that question for it dares the teacher of literature to talk about FORM.

5. Encourage the students to write their own stories using the Greene story as a 'starter' and then to share the stories with on another.

6. The necessity for the teacher to describe his own related experience with the class, as an example of just one more element in the responding process.

The above 'method' for that story does not strike me as a formal compromise between differing attitudes about teaching literature but a relaxed yet controlled merging of two sets of professional styles and general assumptions.

How this move towards a more mature practice developed, in such a short time, amongst people from diverse backgrounds and widely different professional experiences was a fascinating dynamic to observe. The actual stages in the process I am unable to describe but I should like to present the moving undercurrents of thought in the group, flows of different strengths which contributed so much to the corporate work. I want to try to present a sense of commitment and struggle to the group's work by attempting work-portraits of three participants because, in different ways, these colleagues had direct influence on the final positions.

A. A New Zealander, male, with about six to ten years teaching behind him, I would judge. In many ways he was the still centre of the group, absorbing the tentative offerings and the confident assertions, alike, and then making a considered, sane and toughly intelligent contribution. I found his thinking to be most refreshing because it represented a serious and thoughtful humanity at work in the classroom. Below, are extracts from his considered thoughts about our literature group's work.

"Celebration.

I think that this word was first used in our seminar in the discussion of Ted Hughes' poem "February". To speak of literature as celebration is to endow it with a quality that is perhaps all too rarely seen in literature lessons. Celebration does not mean of course in this context a sense of happiness or joy; rather it refers to an inner quality that a poet or novelist, for example, brings to his work, an affirmation, an assertion, a sense of vital 'being'. Perhaps it is something that characterises all good literature, as well as being a quality that we should strive to bring to our teaching of literature. Certainly from the comments made at one lecture on the teaching of poetry it seems that much teaching misses the mark for both pupil and teachers; where the real celebration should be, there is only boredom or indifferent responses. I feel that the conference could have devoted more attention to the development of new methodologies for the teaching of English and Literature in particular, as well as a discussion of present approaches. Are the demands made on the teaching of literature in the 80's going to be met by present methods of teaching? Will they need to change if there is to be preserved this vital quality of celebration that should be a part of all literature and its teaching?

'Being led' vs. 'What does it mean?'

One seminar member made the pertinent point that we often ask the wrong questions in the teaching of literature. Instead of the inevitable 'What does it mean?' we should, it was suggested, ask the question 'Where does this (work of literature) lead us?' There are two important points about this question, I feel. The first has to do with the nature of literary response. When we ask the question 'What does it mean?' we imply that there is a finite and definite answer to the question. It almost sometimes allows no other possibilities than those that are offered. In short, it can be restrictive response. Literary response is more akin to a process than a product; it will change, grow, develop, be modified by further encounters with the work. It is wrong to think of literary response as being static, because any work of literary merit should reveal more of itself to the reader in subsequent re-readings. No teacher should wish that a pupil's response should be limited to one reading of the work only, or limited to one particular view only of the work.

The second point about this question is its emphasis on the response of the reader that does not place him in a situation that his answer may be 'wrong' and because of this possibility will not offer anything. It is often assumed that by virtue of his position as the teacher, that the teacher is aware of what the answer will be, fully and completely. It is up to the pupil to provide some sort of satisfactory response which by its very nature might be based on all sorts of non-literary foundations, e.g. the pupil may give a response not based on what he actually thinks but based instead on the response that he feels may be more favourably received by the teacher, or a response that is the direct result of what he has been taught or has read than that which he really feels to be the case.

Giving voice.

Again, this word was used in one of the seminars in connection, I believe, with one of the poems that we discussed. It was, to me, a term that I was not familiar with and yet was one that intrigued me when I first heard it. I suppose that all literary creation, is in a sense, the writer giving voice to whatever he feels within him. We are all familiar with the type of personalised literary creation that seems to be at the heart of an expression such as this. But, of course, it has its other side too, in terms of liteary response. Such response is just as much giving voice as the original literary creation; in a sense the process of literary creation/response is not complete until both writer and reader have given voice, in statement and response as it were. I felt it a pity that our particular group did not have more time to look at samples of pupils' writing that was prompted by the short story "I SPY". I think that it would have been very fruitful if the teacher explained why he set the exercise he did and how be believed it helped the pupil to 'give voice' as it were. Giving voice is much more I think than simply responding to something - or indeed even just stating something. The phrase carries within itself something of a positive affirmation, a sense that when we help a pupil to give voice we are assisting the pupil in some way to make the work of literature his own and give in return some expression of the encounter that he had with that literature. We are attempting, are we not, as teachers to help pupils not only 'appreciate' literature, to be able to respond to it, but also, as an integral and essential part of that process of the teaching of literature helping them to give expression of themselves, in their own way, in their own hopes, joys, sorrows, or whatever? Literary responses can often take the form of a new literary creation. Literature should help us respond to and understand what is within us, but it should also be able to (having responded ourselves) create, give voice to what we feel ourselves. It may not be too much of an exaggeration to think of literature in these terms as a liberation of part of the essence of man.

Sharing.

When we say we teach literature, I believe we have to really closely analyse precisely what we mean by the word 'teach'. It is one of the tragic things about external exams that they tend by their nature to force teachers into a role which is often not one that is conducive to promoting a creative literary response in pupils. With public, external exams there is always the reckoning that must be faced when the pupil faces the exam in question, a question that by its nature limits response, channels it in particular ways and then provides some impersonal evaluation at the end, still often in the form of a mark out of 20. Literary response may be confined to the narrow formula of writing a suitable expository essay. Sometimes the response may be demanded in this way on a poem that has never been encountered before, until that moment when the exam paper is put in front of the candidate. Such constraints kill the literary response or, rather, process. I prefer to call it 'sharing'. This concept exists on several levels, I believe, in the teaching and response to literature. Of primary importance is the sharing between author and reader. This is the primary response in any literary work and the most important. As teachers we are surely trying to enable pupils to make this encounter as intrinsically self-sustaining as possible. The desire to participate in this relationship should be such that it requires no extrinsic motivation. In this respect I found Geoffrey Summerfield's remarks on the individual's response to literature and its primary importance very interesting. I would not go so far as to say this should be the only form of literary response but I do believe that it is the most important. It is the readers' initial response as well as being that which will provide the basis for a continuing involvement with literature.

A second type of sharing that needs to be fostered is that between reader and reader. Good literature and a positive response will often prompt one reader to share, discuss, evaluate literature with another person, on equal terms. The development of group work in the classroom is an obvious formal reflection of this but the classroom should also provide an environment in which informal sharing between pupils can take place. This sort of approach may well mean that new techniques, new approaches need to be made. Certainly at the very least it will mean that within each classroom there will need to be provided a literature rich environment to which all pupils have access and which all can share freely. A new role for school libraries might very well be part of the demands of the new classroom.

The third type of sharing which is crucial is that between teacher and pupil. We heard much at the conference about 'intervention', with particular reference to the teacher's intervention in the response area of classroom activity. It is obvious that by its very nature teaching is a form of intervention and that in the literary process that nature of teacher intervention will be crucial. Insensitive intervention could well mean disaster while, supportive intervention will promote the pleasure of literature and its value to the individual. I think that one of the lessons learnt from the conference is that this intervention by the teacher may well need re-definition in the literature teaching of the future. New techniques will need to be developed to accommodate new forms of literature in the classroom which have not traditionally held place in literature teaching.

In summary then I have been led to conclude that literature in the creation and response is a celebration, a vital insight into the nature and experience of man. Response is often in the state of flux; it can not be said to be final or complete; in a work of literature there must always be more to discover. Both writer and reader share the all-important concern of literature that enables them both to give voice, to personally involve themselves in many ways with fundamental issues that concern people."

B. An American, a lady, with wide experience in the classroom and an accomplished professional writer of imaginative prose. She is all intuition and fire, but a supressed fire; we all felt the heat without being burned. No-one in the whole conference could douse her flames, not one individual could match her deft touch with words. Our group took a lot from this lady and the eventual sureness of its responses owed a debt to her promptings :

"To know a poem one has to let it happen several ways. One has to read it several ways. We try several definitions of poetry in our group to suggest what it is the poet wants us to look for in a poem : Kenneth Burke's 'one sentence expanded' ... Greg Corso's 'poetry is a fired shoe'.... Each definition suggests a different kind of reading, some rational and orderly; some more intuitive .... Reading and understanding are both logical and intuitive ... I seldom give my kids enough time to read items intensively, silently, invisibly so that the poem takes them with a sigh.... We are teachers, but we have also begun to ask questions about process : Where does a poem come from? Where does it want to take us? What pictures do we see in a poem? We dare to say :

1. a good poem grows by comparison with others that come from the same sources,

2. it asks us to talk about what it is as well as what it is not,

3. a good poem is not diminished by repetition.

Nor does it require a teacher to force all meaning out of the poem but sooner or later, it makes us wonder, makes us ask : 'Isn't this meaning possible?' and then we go after that meaning. If that interpretation isn't possible and we still want to hang in there, then, Solomon-like, we have to offer to cut the baby in half or in quarters to see if all the parts, all those interpretations, come together to make one baby, one poem. If a poem does not make us wonder, has no reverberations, is it still a poem?

We are still re-discovering the wheel, the wheel of criticism, the wheel of enjoyment, the wheel of appreciation. Process is criticism. It is also silence. It is both ....

... Education is a drawing out process. Is it not also a putting in? Why polarities? Because old pedagogies fail to imagine the young so that education appears always to be a putting in? Because they insist there is a right and a wrong and impose the right way? Is there another reason? The proper role of criticism is, I think, to bring the past into the present, not to destroy the present with the past but to make comparisons. But it destroys? The proper role of criticism, says a friend from Australia, is to help us read a work much better than we have already .... I want my students to see what critics see. For I believe that the process brings product, and the product is the real enjoyment of a work of literature, even into revealing that the work may 'stink'.... I want my students to have the power of criticism.

'Teaching is healing' says our conference.

'Teaching must wound both the teacher and the students, too' say I.

To teach well, to learn well is, I think, to know that we are not going to live for ever, not on this earth at any rate and to make a moral commitment that we will imagine one another. I am prepared to ask the child to imagine me."

C. An Australian, male, fifteen years teaching mostly in high schools, but for several years at the tertiary level. He was the group's goad, though a gentle one, because he reminded us of hard issues we must continually face and which we must try to answer for ourselves in relation to our private teaching worlds with individual students in lone classrooms. This man's affirmations, characteristically understated, were an encouragement to the group's 'processing' an activity helping each other to achieve a greater personal clarity.

"... language is in the nature of the human mind and the human mind is in the nature of language. To treat a poem as language, then, is to accept the nature of humanity. Yet not because a poem may have a higher quality but because it has a quality, no matter how breathtaking, which is the quality of the human condition .... But we should also, I believe, be prepared to consider the breadth of all human utterance in a literary way."

This may give shape to a unanimous and strongly held view in the group, the absolute necessity to read out loud to give voice :

"... we came to the poem without any preparation so one of us read it aloud. That enveloped and conjoined us in such a network that our communal response was, 'read it again!'....

... voicing was a significant, recognised need in our response to 'Welsh Incident'. The sense of a poem talking, the awareness of situation, the movement of the narrative with its bobbing interjections all cried to be given lift in performed voicing .... In our teaching we all agreed that by giving students the opportunity to say things aloud, whatever their thoughts might be, they are able to unblock their thinking. Where blockages aren't exposed the thinker is isolated with his difficulty. Similarly, a sharper intuitive insight could be swept into a wave by the interest of the whole class and they could move onward; or a deviant creative reading became available for everyone."

This man's comment about the lesson transcripts succinctly put the general view of our group, a view compounded of admiration, humility, embarrassment and gratitude for an awakening :

"The reading of lesson transcripts was the most powerful trade-learning experience I've had for a long time. The students were clearly involved in the literary experience; they glossed; they alluded; they came together and diverged. The event was a social experience for them. Sometimes they were asserting the values of the group, almost telling the code. Very literary."

Finally, in the group there were a number of quiet but very determined voices which asserted other complementary values and commitment. One, the still-to-be-won battle for a central place in the English classroom for books specifically written for the adolescent. Two, the professional necessity for placing the skills of the teacher-librarian at the forefront of our practices. These steady assertions underlined a realisation that teachers need to cultivate their own voices; to make their own views heard more widely; to make public, private affirmations of the value of literature in their own lives.

A WEEK IN THREE HOURS : TEACHERS TALKING AND WRITING

Ian Hansen (AUSTRALIA)

Each seminar group was asked to present a statement at the Commission's end. Seminar 5 was of one mind on this: all they wished to say to the Commission as a whole was

> We have been nourished and enthused by what we have done and heard. In making this very brief statement, we are not opting out but opting in. As with our students, so with us: we need time to digest our experiences and reflect upon them, whether these experiences in literature are others' or our own, set down by others or by ourselves.

The reading of that statement to the plenary gathering of the Commission was met with silence. Other seminar-group statements were much more extended, lengthy, even. One really needs to know something of the make-up of a group of educators to understand such brevity.

The members of Seminar 5 brought with them a wide range of experience: there were four teacher-educators, and two service personnel (an area consultant, a library services executive), and the background of the classroom teachers ranged from two prestigious independent schools, through schools of unwilling working-class urban students to a school in an Australian outback mining community. There was a gentle man from the University of Peking, two New Zealanders, a South African and representatives from five Australian states. There were differences in attitude, of course. While a sub-group was preparing a presentation of Robert Graves' 'Welsh Incident', it was suggested that lines 3 and 19-21 should be given to various voices and that the beginning of line 39 should be multiplied to a diminuendo 'No, no, no, no, no'. There ensued a spirited discussion concerning the sanctity of text: 'if Graves had wanted four voices in line 3, he'd have punctuated accordingly'; 'there are only two no's at line 39, not five - if he'd wanted five, he'd have written five'. There was no resolution of the matter. Indeed, there were several instances through the week of opinions clashing, but in some curious chemical way the group adhered, perhaps a combined function of the group's convenient size (no one could escape) and diversity of background.

The morning of the first day was bright with promise of becoming hot. The desks in the seminar room were removed to the walls and four small sub-groups addressed themselves to Nemerov's "The Companions". Despite time having been taken for each participant to introduce himself or herself to the whole group, the small circles at first watched each other warily. As one of the participants was later to write, 'the discussion of 'The Companions' was hesitant, and in fact most of the early discussion centred on students' responses to poetry. Anything but the poem.' The Commission's planners had chosen the poems to be a threat to the teachers, to stimulate in some way the situation often imposed by teachers upon their students. And something of a threat this experience was. The room became warm and people fiddled with windows.

Generally "The Companions" eased the groups into a sharing. Very soon comments were made about the poem being clearly in the main tradition of English poetry - Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' was invoked, for example - that the voices behind Nemerov's were those of Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Eliot, and particularly of Frost. The poem was thus 'placed'. It was felt to be clear and straightforward with a nice attention to childhood:

> ... I think that if I'm trying to write a poem where I'm going back into my childhood, one of the things I reach back for is enjoying the old language rhymes. I feel it would be quite legitimate for somebody to borrow from it the 'toad' and 'road', and 'glisten' and 'listen'. They don't seem to me bad words for a poem where you are trying to recapture something.
>
> (tape transcript)

Soon, however, the poem began to be shifted about. It became not so much a something in itself as a stimulus to or reminder of the participants' other concerns. They began discussion with schools and students ('anything but the poem'), attended to the poem and then returned to schools and students.

> (Nemerov) is, I think, in his image really is appealing to current imagery of ancient things. You know, Tolkien sort of old trees, you know, weird creatures, things like that, isn't he?
>
> (tape transcript)

Could a six-year-old apprehend the poem? Perhaps the first stanza - all those invisible friends they have. Not Years 7 and 8. Year 10?

> Would (students) in fact be enabled through this poem to learn something? That would be my yardstick. And if they could in fact learn something of the past - now I have a lot of Polynesian students who in theory at least have many links with traditions and a culture which would include superstitions, perhaps - maybe they would - I don't know - that's the question I'd want to ask the teenager, because I take it is a risk, that.
>
> Gee, I reckon that's a critical question. I'm conscious that the older I get and the more my interests change, the more possibility there is that there is a gap between where I am with my work of literature and where they are.
>
> (tape transcript)

Therefore, ran an argument, English teachers, who used to be fearful of poems, now look for response ('whatever (students) have responded to, well that's fair enough'). But to claim that any response will do is a risky claim. The teacher has a responsibility to both students and poems to legitimate response and even to make judgements about kinds of response. Teachers do this all the time but

> It's worrying, isn't it? Because you feel you should get somewhere and if they respond to one poem, then you give them another poem. You think, 'Right - they ought to, on the grounds of what they have done with the first poem, they ought to be able to do more with next' and the don't: they do less. You think Ha ha! Instant failure.
>
> What do you mean do? Because that's the thing I don't think there should necessarily be any doing.
>
> (tape transcript)

'The Companions' was, paradoxically, a threatening comfort. The group felt at ease with it and journeyed not inwards but outwards.

'February' was not read aloud to them, as 'The Companions' had been. The participants sat in their little clusters and read silently. Despite the 'black pine forest', the 'moonlit doorstep', the 'blue snow', the sun struck strongly at the glass of the windows. The room trembled for a moment in the sudden heat. 'I think ...', 'What is ...?', 'I don't understand ...' and the poem strode about the walls snarling.

> I don't seem to be able to get further ... with unravelling the meaning. My response is simply to enjoy the wolfish words and the way words have been played with, and I seem not to be so interested in the meaning ... Whether it's because I'm not in the mood, and all I want to enjoy is the language. And that difficulty inevitably makes me think of the students' difficulty, which is me being a teacher - I think that is quite relevant.
>
> (tape transcript)

It was 'humiliating' not to be able to 'get to the bottom of it.' The poem was too difficult; there were too many traps in it. Some participants reacted to meanings more quickly than others ('and in a class of kids there is going to be this difference'). The poem was by Ted Hughes; therefore the teacher would be able to make his/her own connections, to prepare in advance. Or, alternatively, take the poem into a class 'and work it through together, so that you are completely open ... minimise (yourself) as much as possible'. For with sixteen year olds it will be the wolf-image that will come through, not the message.

Participants jumped backwards and forwards through the poem. Linear progression was only disconcerting. The Little Red Riding Hood image ('that long grin/Above the tucked coverlet') only came clear on a second or third reading, for example; similarly, with the child-memory of the foolish boy in fable ('Now it is the dream cries 'Wolf!'). 'A sense of loss, not a sense of fear' began to be articulated, and, further, the coming of the chosen one ('a sort of wolf-messiah') who will remake the wolf tribe. The poem continued to snarl in the room, though not as loudly as before.

> (But) look at the responses we have had around this group. I obviously felt that my emotional impression, which has coloured my interpretation, is obviously different from some others, because I see this man as welcoming the gift of the wolf's head or becoming the wolf's. And I saw 'mouths clamped well into the world' as being an absolutely positive statement and apparently a lot of you felt it was horrific and fearful.
>
> (tape transcript)

No uniform view emerged; 'but why should we have a uniform view?' At least 'February' was an absorbing poem, the coming to terms with it an exciting challenge.

Before the group took a break for morning coffee, the seminar leader set the members a writing task, to be a summary of personal response to the learning experience they had just had. Upon the participants' return, the room, hot yet, took on a palpable silence. No one spoke. There was a stunning silence.

Almost one-half of the group continued to agonise over 'February', some participants came back at the poem quite directly.

> ... Except for the last two stanzas, it's starting to fall out. In the 'real world' of stanzas 2 and 3, wolves have been destroyed by man the hunter, or tamed into wolf-hounds obedient to his command. Wolves exist more only in my dreams. (Someone recalls the folk story of the boy that cries 'wolf!' - I think this is a red herring but may accommodate this clever pun into my interpretation later). The dream comes in to day-time musing - the wolf symbol obsesses him to such an extent that it keeps out other thought - 'siege(s) all thought'.
>
> Stanza 4 has the pun 'pawing/poring' - the poet in his thinking comes to an explosive dog-like halt, scattering stones and dust by the recalled images of the hanged and dancing wolves, senses perverted (eyes begging, not searching), destructive power abused (teeth catching a ball).
>
> Now to engage those last lines. Civilised society has destroyed brute animal society - instinctive elemental destructive blood energy - or subverted it in the case of the trained wolf. Have we ourselves become over-civilised? Is the wolf a symbol of our own and the poet's alienation of his true instinctive self from the body that has become inarticulate through education and social pressures to be compliant and very destructive?
>
> All we have is the appearance - the footprints - the head is 'vanished'. But 'nature' - that dark, elemental power - is seeking integration and wholeness ... (Stuart)

... How to re-unite the two realities of wolfishness? How is the mind's wolf to be reconnected with the historic wolf? The images of disconnection multiply. The real wolf of history is bodiless, headless. True wolves (of any sort!) cannot be denied, in the way the 'wolf-man' feels them. Their savage defiance is not adequately captured in the wolf 'caged or storied, or pictured' - they demand union, totality again in their 'true world search/For their vanished head'. This is how the 'wolf-man' sees it; and the search, too, is 'for the world/Vanished with the head'.

There is no control without a 'head', no knowledge, no power, no will to act - and thus no world, no connection, no meaning. For the 'wolf-man', it may fall to his lot to be the Chosen One, who will perform the act of restoration, who will provide the head that will once again give power and meaning to the world, make the world comprehensible. The ambiguity of Hughes' language in the final verse is disturbing. There is terror; perhaps there is also a sense of triumphant madness, as the man sits 'under severe moons', driven to his impossible task of creating the perfect 'wolf-mask'. The ambiguity of the mask image is splendid; the mask is really a disguise - if the man can only get the disguise just right, he will be safe, he will control the world, he will be the master of both the ferocity and power of the wolf to harness as his own. He will have an invincible grip of life, 'mouths clamped well into the world'. And, of course, he will be relieved of the necessity of being himself.

(Ros)

... The response was immediate - in the first line - the language was sharp with imag[illegible] and it became a treasure hunt for meaning, a search for understanding ... though 'February' was full of images from elsewhere, it was also like nothing else - belonging entirely to itself.

The poem as I see it deals with the nightmarish elemental world which civilisation resists - we cage, picture or story the imagination - we traduce it by compartmentalising what things mean - we reject the darker parts of the imagination - we don't want such terrors to inhabit our heads. As the 'he' in the poem is afraid the wolf-feet will claim his head, so we put on (or rather make) masks which seem to present a fierce hold on the apparent reality of the world. I think that the 'lest' preceding 'they choose his head' suggests fear - resistance to the notion of those feet claiming his head.

(Margaret)

... Both (poems) were concerned with childhood fears, the one seeming to lessen with advancing age and maturity (Nemerov), though with an apparent sense of loss; the other seeming to persist into adult life, suggesting a retrogressive or arrested psychological development: Hughes (or the persona of the poem, probably closely linked

> with Hughes himself in view of his later existentialist poems and his personal life with Sylvia Plath) has not grown beyond the fearful fantasies of childhood expressed in his Nibelung and Red Riding Hood images; he seems to cling to these anxieties, wants to visualise and preserve rather than outgrow them ...
>
> (David Bri.)

Other participants internalised the experience of 'February':

> ... (It) strongly brought to the fore my current mood and the situation I find myself in in the group. We hastened too quickly to find the meaning of the poem and in so doing we put on wolf-masks and clamped our teeth well into the world with possible explanations, too frightened to reveal our lack of direction. Headless I preferred to let others run headless ...
>
> (Baxter)

They wanted more time:

> ... In fact I felt a little dissatisfied with the group clarification. I was helped, but lost the poem rather. That final response - imaginative leap at the 'wolfishness' was more intense. I would rather look at those images longer - see the real pictures even and contemplate them before I came to a decision finally on interpretation.
>
> (David Bre.)

Other written submissions drifted from the poems into the learning context.

> ... 'February' was a ... successful poem to discuss, as it provides enormous possibilities for different interpretations. However, the first reading was extremely difficult as I found it hard to concentrate in a room full of people attempting to concentrate.
>
> (Jill)

Comment was made concerning the experience of close-group-work:

> ... (it) worked fairly well but this was helped by the willingness and interest of participants. I feel it was a good method ... Discussion, although slow to begin, was informative, thought-provoking and ultimately rewarding. (Plenary) circle discussion was particularly useful.
>
> ... these workshop activities are not new - they are very valuable, given interest and willingness in the group. I felt I had a broadened understanding of the material (and) I felt I achieved some understanding of the processes of thought, order, relations within group work.
>
> (Sally)

Another writer wondered seriously whether teachers use small group initial discussions of poems as often as they might.

Individual method should not be ignored.

> The kinds of interpretation I chose personally to make of the poetry depended initially on associations perceived between each poem and other literature - with Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality' in the case of 'The Companions' and a story by Alison Uttley in The Country Child about the fickle and untrustworthy qualities of elm trees ...
>
> Again, in 'February', the initial response was generated by recognition of the literary antecedants and the teasing out of meaning in relation to symbolism of the wolves in folk-literature and such stories as Joan Aiken's The Wolves of Willoughby Chase. The idea of the need for 'imaginary dragons', a world in which Fafnir might exist, certainly coloured my interpretation. Was this a case of a strongly-held personal idea helping me to come to an interpretation of the poem, or obstructing my understanding of what the poet meant? I saw the poem as a call for the return of a world-related wolfish reality, not an emasculated taming of elemental terrors, but clearly others in the group, focussing on 'wolf-masks', saw the poet's meaning very differently.
>
> The whole exercise pointed to the diversity of response we can expect in classrooms, the difficulties students with a more limited background must find in encoding, and raised the big question of the role of the teacher in shaping 'acceptable' response or accepting limited, and to his or her mind inaccurate interpretations.
>
> (Glenys)

And these students of ours, how are they feeling? For this seminar experience

> gave us the opportunity which we seldom get of being 'forced' to respond verbally to a poem/piece of literature, to feel daunted that someone says, and says well, just what you'd thought of; to reassess quickly your own response in the light of another insight you'd not seen; to feel gratified and/or disappointed by others' reactions to what you'd said. More rather than less the workshop simulated what we often do to students. Before I 'do' a poem in class, I give myself time to go over it, look up references etc. In class, students need to humble themselves to ask for much more than we as teachers needed.
>
> Had a headache: we don't know often if kids are suffering from some physical discomfort: salutary, that ...
>
> (Ursula)

How we feel about a poem depends on how we feel at the time we read it:

> ... People's personal experiences vary and when they read a poem and think 'That's me', they bring into their understanding of the poem their own personal sentiments. This applies to all literature and perhaps all nationalities. The interpretation of a Chinese poem may vary greatly from person to person, and sometimes in this case of one person from day to day, depending on his mood...
>
> (Hu)

Personal reminiscence surfaced:

> I am confused, bemused by my own university experiences. Briefly - chronologically - .
>
> At school, responses were governed by knowledge of the writer; what I thought the teachers wanted (always difficult to predict); what I thought the questions were testing and experts (teachers and cribs). The script/text disappeared very quickly in this process. I did most of my reading out of school and never discovered poetry ...
>
> At university the rot set in. Confidence disappeared, rumours ruled. Prof. G. was a heavies' man, Dr. S. was traditional, Mr. P. was nice! I never ever came to grips with the 'guess-what-They-want' game. I liked some works, dismissed others, read and re-read some. What were the rules? What was right? Who was right? I read critical works and plagiarised grotesquely. The approach that said concentrate on the text alone seemed like a glorious short cut ...
>
> (Pat)

And honest accounts of struggle:

> Isn't it interesting how - when other people are talking about a poem - you yourself are busy sifting. Some people make me marshall defensive forces and barriers, not against them but against an interpretation they state which conflicts with the one I'm entertaining. Other people articulate a current rhythm of mine. What I have to see (this is me preaching to myself, as I write this) is that the people of the first kind are exploring their way towards certainty just as I am. How absurd to get combative against what they are saying, when - after all- they have dared to venture to say in public how they feel and what they think. What we need is an atmosphere in which (1) we nourish other people's willingness to venture tentatively and (2) we encourage: mobility, flexibility, shift, re-phrasing, movement to a new temporary position, doubling back without feeling guilt at being inconsistent, leaping out without fear of falling in...
>
> This is not to say that there is no such thing as a misreading. Nor that we must be perpetually tentative never alighting on a truth, over-acceptance of the idea that every truth can be

countered by its opposite, and as long as we're tolerant we needn't drive ourselves toughly to the point of holding a belief.

What it does say is - well, I'm not sure yet! - But it's along the lines that the process of responding will include lots of curious probing and relatively undirected and scattered searching in the early stages, and a gradual coming to firmer terms later on. Our teaching ought to follow from this.

Hmm! Response, says J. Britton, ought to be like a negative coming off a positive in a developing dish not like an express train going through a tunnel. I see what this means - but there ought to be an even better image, to account for the relative randomness of search in the early stages and its refinement into a later mature (undogmatizing) certainty.

(Don)

At morning coffee, in Sydney University's Merrewether complex, one of the group met a boyhood companion whom he had not seen for years: the meeting was totally unexpected. Neither knew the other would be at the Conference. On returning to the seminar room, this member responded thus:

Merrewether Hall

Doing poems properly for what's to come
Hughes and Nemerov together
Tugging at something back there
Stuck
Cigarette smoke suspended in sunlight

He glanced at me across
the half-moon of his plastic cup
And smiled
Distracted I swallowed my carefully kept
Positioned tea leaves
And awkwardly we grasped at hands
Forgetting names
But not the paddock where we kicked
The ball after four if mother let us
And the red welts from the nettles

He's a principal now
Somewhere important
And I do poems 'properly' with kids
His house and mine
Were never far apart

(Jeff)

The range of response, the tentativeness of response, two chords struck again and again; the insecurity of it all, the distracting headaches, the embarrassments and the awkwardnesses. There was the partial and unformed; 'I thought ... but ...', 'I don't seem to be able ...', 'How is ...?', 'probably', 'I would rather ...', 'However ...', all focussed in Don's backing and filling, turning this way and that, in Hu's remembering that his Chinese poems shift their colours day by day. Poems, like words of which they are composed,

> Crack and sometimes break, strain, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still ... voices
> Scolding ... or merely chattering,
> Always assail them.

And there was the range of ways the group-members tried to cope with the experience. Stuart, Ros, Margaret worried away at meaning like well-trained retrievers, splashing through thickets of rushes and reeds looking here, looking there. Glenys was reminded of other things in her literary compass, like other wolves; and Jeff wrote a poem. The right response?

What did the group do for the rest of the week? It hardly seems important, somehow. For the record, two halves of the group presented 'Welsh Incident', independently and differently, with vigour and flair, without inhibition - how the poems had revealed the participants to each other! Members tackled the "I Spy" lesson-transcripts and students' writing, lessons with their own regular classes or with borrowed classes, ten transcript extracts and thirty-five pieces of writing, an embarras de richesse for sixteen people. Discussions were characterised by the partial and open, by genuine curiousity about the students whose reactions had been recorded. And part-way through the week it was pointed out quite firmly that on the cover-sheet of the Commission's pre-Conference reading was the title 'The Place of Literature (including Children's Literature)'. It was clear that no specific time had been set aside for the consideration of children's literature: the group decided to devote at least a morning to this area. The seminar-leader produced the following brief document:

Children's Literature: Some Starters

1. Except in the practice of reading aloud, pater familias to household, or of the tome passed from hand to hand and read aloud from in turn, the act of reading is profoundly solitary. It cuts the reader off from the rest of the room. It seals the sum of his consciousness behind unmoving lips. Loved books are the necessary and sufficient society of the alone.

   George Steiner

2. Fiction can give us ... pleasure without any painful consequences, for there is no price-tag on the magic world of imaginative enactment. But fiction does not give us only what we want; more importantly it may give us things we hadn't even known we wanted.

   Robert Penn Warren

3. We write as much from latency as from memory.

   John Updike.

4. A random half-dozen for secondary students; have you read:

Susan Cooper	The Dark is Rising
Robert Cormier	The Chocolate War
Peter Dickinson	Annerton Pit
Louise Fitzhugh	Nobody's Family is Going to Change
Lois Lowry	A Summer to Die
Maia Wojciechowska	A Single Light?

The library consultant in the group asked each member to nominate some half-dozen titles and (since she was Sydney-based) brought a full display of those titles, together with a number of her own choice: the morning began with the provoking document and moved easily into a spirited sharing of books. Extracts were read aloud, picture-books marvelled over, lists made.

But what the seminar-group was able to do was achieved on the first morning. Then they felt, were afraid, laughed, argued, were puzzled, agreed. It was the place of literature to set this all up. After those initial three hours, the rest of the week was hardly more important or less, for it was the essence of response that flowed into all the subsequent activities, where the two chords, range and tentativeness, struck again and again.

A FORAY INTO THE FUTURE

Geoffrey Summerfield (ENGLAND)

> "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have returned from our
> foray into the future. Our report is appended.
>
> The final peaks are impossibly steep...."
>
> (Judith Wright : "Report of a Working Party")

The euphoria of Dartmouth in the 60's felt a long way away. And so on the whole did the political resonances of York in the 70's. Is it that we had become disenchanted or anxious? No, I think not. If I were asked to summarise the ethos of the section of the Literature Commission with which I worked, I would say it was serious, modest, tentative, yet committed. Not to mention the good temper that characterised virtually all of our session.

We declined - rightly, I think - to indulge in futurology; we could not see, so to speak, beyond next week. Besides, we had immediate work to do; tests to report on, responses to texts, and our responses to those responses. "Education ... is all individuals; no less various". (James Agee) Who could hope to give a scrupulous and detailed account of the varieties of circumstances, character, intention, or aspiration that were offered? Certainly, I can't So, instead, I shall simply try to give a purely personal account of my impressions, subjectively.

It's deeply satisfying to give as much of one's self's attention as one can muster to reading a poem by Ted Hughes; to receive as much of the strength of feeling, the intensity of 'feel', of perception, the sheer range and resonance of allusion; to be stretched almost to bursting, by the sheer energy of the darker visions. And yet I missed his voice, his speaking voice; we lost something in taking the poem from a silent page.

"February" is a characteristic tour de force, a tremendous little myth of transformation and possession; it arouses in me a primal shudder, a sense of sharp terror and of simultaneous exhilaration. And it was almost like 'coming home', when I found new colleagues in Sydney giving their attention to this grim Northern poem; incongruous too, since the benignly summery weather felt deeply inappropriate. And it was incongruous also to find, in urbane confident contemporary Sydney, attention being paid to Graham Greene's little fiction of a rather grubby, rather shabbily Wellesian corner of England. But such is, perhaps, one of the last vestigial legacies of a dying colonialism : that literature should be construed as English Literature. As if Australia, for example, had not yet come of age, had not reached the age of cultural discretion.

What, then, was happening to us, as we read these texts together? Would such 'happening' throw any light on our responsibilities as teachers? Could such shared reading be construed as in any way usefully analogous to our tasks in the classroom? Could we, moreover, transcend the subtle but deep differences of dialect and of accent, those prickly features of the common language that divides us, and come together in the shared experience of a valued text? And if we could, what value would such an experience have? Is the process of encountering art not of its very nature, inescapably, a solitary act? Are there not other more effective and more appropriate ways of achieving some sense of community?

In the event, the very act of working together seems to have been valuable; one could hear hinges squeak, as minds opened to each other; there was a leaning forward as people really listened to others; good humour and candour had a good run for their money. And yet, and yet ....

The process of collaborative reading smacked too much of an institutional task. A fine poem does not exist in order to promote fellowship, to engender the goodwill that comes from congenial collaboration. But perhaps the social benefits were an incidental by-product of the work of shared reading? Certainly they were not the intended goal, the explicit end. And yet, again, what is good learning if it doesn't involve the benefit of knowing more clearly what is in other peoples' minds? And yet ....

Was the distinctive power of 'February' not dissipated by all the talk, the exegesis, the exchanges? Did the text not become a document to talk about to disagree about, to interpret? There was much explicit teasing out, much unravelling of syntax, of image, of rhythmic pattern; and as these went about their business, the dark and sombre spirit of the poem, like a wolf, slipped quietly away from the light of the sensible didactic talk. The critical spirit, a whiff of reductiveness, the itch to pin down 'meaning' - all served to extirpate the wolfish ghost. I put it harshly, uncharitably, but it's undeniable that the poem became the locus for a rather willed search for coherent meaning; an exercise, even in translation, converting the wayward and cunning indirections and feints of the poem into some kind of clear linearity.

Well, we 'give' Shakespeare to children who are not ready for him; and in order to ensure that they get anything at all, in order that the task may be not totally futile, we engage in translation in order to give them some kind of meaning, some illusion, some travesty of Shakespeare's meanings. And of course they can't explicity refuse; they refuse implicitly. So we worked to interpret, to translate, Hughes' text into an equivalent, a paraphrase, something manageable, so that we would not, could not, be overwhelemed, disarmed, confused, threatened, appalled, distressed by the poem. We were closer to the 'virtuous philosopher' than we were to the 'camelion poet' (cf. Keats, Letter to Woodhouse, 27 October 1818).

Like Keats, James Agee would have spotted the contradication at once, for he often insisted that there is both daylight-art - the art of the sprightly knowing mind - and night-art; and the best of Hughes is best read at night, when those parts of our consciousness which would resist, or enter fastidious reservations, or nit-pick, are in abeyance, and when the darkness of the poem can do its own peculiar dark work.

But with the best will in the world, we were conducting ourselves as dutiful students, busily 'unpacking' the poem, peeling away, performing the task that our 'English teacher' had set us. Our ratiocinations were subtle; our minds were finely and strenuously tuned; our manners, in listening one to anothers, were above reproach. But we had, on the whole, for the most part, missed the boat.

To paraphrase Eliot, someone should have intervened and said 'You are not here to verify, instruct yourself, or inform curiosity or carry report ... (reading) is more than an order of words, the conscious occupation of the (reading) mind'. What evidence was there, in the midst of our earnest pedagogical decency, that Hughes had shaken us, appalled us, struck us dumb, by lifting the curtain on an animistic, atavistic darkness? Where was the sufficient piety of awe or of terror? To put it more generally, what is there to reading a poem other than reading the poem? Than letting it be? Than reading it, should one so need or desire, again? Than letting it do its own work in its own way? And, of course, 'sleeping on it'?

Instead of allowing ourselves slowly and naturally to assimilate the poem, we accommodated ourselves to a 'conscious occupation'. And in the process, the poem was dismembered, reduced to ash, expelled by explanations. As in Holub's poem, the functionary said 'Listen! Listen!' so of course no one heard anything. Which is one way of representing the institutionalization of the study or art. Or, as Adrian Mitchell put it, cold hand on hot flesh. But where, then, is a satisfactory alternative to be found? If we learn our explicatory cleverness from our university tutors, where is a wiser sense to be found?

It is of course offered in our real lives, our private lives, whenever we are possessed by a work of art. And if we know that anything approaching an adequate grasp of, say, The Prelude has taken us a dozen years, how can we possibly 'do' it with our older pupils/students in a month, three months, six months? The nonsense of such lunacy surely speaks for itself. The absurdity has only to be simply posed for it to be recognised as absurd.

If, then, the eighties are indeed to offer new possibilities for our pupils' experience of literature, how are we to fare forward? In what direction should we move? On this question, I detected no concensus. At one extreme, there were those who pressed the claims of a deeper subjectivity. At the other, those who stressed the public, daylight, shared, communal possibilities, and here there were many who saw the teacher as one having certain inalienable responsibilities : it is the teacher, or no one, who is experienced in the reading of complex texts; and it is, therefore, the teacher's responsibility to initiate pupils into the delicate skills of finely tuned, closely attentive, mentally intensive reading.

How, it was asked, do our pupils come to aspire to any adequate level of rigour in their reading unless the teacher has set a continuously effective example of rigorous reading? Conversely, how are we to bring our pupils to the point at which they can assume an appreciable level of autonomy in their reading, and find, for themselves, that appreciation is indeed, as Henry James insisted, a process of 'making it our own'?

Lurking underneath all these issues were the contradictory, equally pressing claims of the Many and the One : how to meet the specific needs of each individual, and how to find those common factors that will effectively and usefully include the whole class : how best, how most profitably, to attend to one text with all our pupils? And how to decide which text is to be chosen for such attention?

The unifying ideal, in matters of process, was perhaps best located in the model of 'conversation', in which individuals can participate in an act which 'they experience as freely chosen', (Margaret Donaldson's phrase), contributing their own particular insights, opinions, evaluation, connections. But we have to admit straightaway that conversation when felt to be congenial is also felt as symmetrical, non-didactic, non-hierachical. But 'conversation' about an adult text that we rather than our pupils have chosen, and which we know more thoroughly, more intimately, than they do, is likely to turn very soon into discussion, i.e. teacher-dominated discussion. Is there, then, a way of setting up and conducting a purposeful, goal-directed discussion in such a way that our pupils experience it as conversation?

Small-group work, short-term assignments, with clearly focussed goals, certainly offer such a possibility : they can both grow out of, and feed back into, the larger arena of the whole class, directed and guided by the teacher's intentions. The teacher : pupil ratio of 1 : 30 is something that we must get around. The small group is more comfortable; it allows for more activity on the part of each pupil than does the whole class; and it finds room for a more flexible interplay between the ways of talking that the pupils bring into the classroom with them, and those models of discourse that we hope to lead them toward. And, perhaps most important, it is less likely to promote falsity, the assumed voice, pretentiousness, the magisterially generalizing, precociously assured, large gesture : I'm thinking of the vacuous, grandiloquent language that pupils of 17 can fall into (through reaching too high!) when they are invited or pressed into 'explaining the meaning' of, say, Antony and Cleopatra.

What value do we really, implicity, set on the work of a mature adult of genius, when we force adolescents into coming to conclusions about such work? Is it not a perversion of a potentially decent interprise? Should we not now recognise - better late than never - that there is a literature for 12 year-olds, one for 14 year-olds, one for 16 year-olds, all of which are conspicuously and essentially different from the work of middle-aged or elderly poets and novelists? One has only to think of all the ink spilled over the question of which Shakespeare plays are 'suitable' for the lower-school or the middle-school. Do we then need a new 'map' of literature, much more sensitive to the peculiar contours and local features of that strange place called adolescence? Or is it, rather, that we need better, cannier, subtler ways of getting adolescents to a point where they themselves can begin adequately to assimilate and accommodate to the meanings of 'adult' texts?

As the decade moves on, we shall doubtless hear far more from those who propose 'adolescent literature', but - if I may intrude an emphatically personal note - the pressure-groups that now exist to promote an 'adolescent literature' seem to me to be in danger of falling into deep confusions; especially about the reasons why anyone needs literature, and about the interface of private lives and public talk. Adolescence is a verb-form that signifies a process of becoming - and as Dr. Johnson once observed, babies don't want to read about babies. Can literature not offer compelling representations of ways of becoming adult? And is adolescent-literature-for-adolescents not inherently committed to contributing to the epidemic contemporary disease of narcissism? A narcissistic literature to provide therapy for students rendered solipsistic by a madly youth-obsessed culture - is this what we are to be reduced to trafficking in?

So : are the slavish paraphrasing and footnoting of Shakespeare (the teacher doing all the work), on one hand, and the tacky poking around in self-regarding adolescent psyches (fictively rendered), on the other - are these our only two irreducible alternatives? I don't recall anyone in Sydney who was pessimistic or desperate enough to admit as much, even though some of those who were anxious to defend the professional status and expertise of the teacher did seem to imply that a text is appropriate only if it is too complex for the students to understand it without the supervening intervention of the teacher. Similarly, I seem to recall one or two embattled individuals raising a tattered almost illegible flag on which one could just make out the word 'relevance'. Ah, Relevance, what crimes have been committed in thy name!

What then is the role, are the roles, of the teacher vis-à-vis literature? If Jerome Bruner was right to insist, as I believe he was, that there is 'a world to be known', how best can we work both to get the appropriate, educative, examples of that world's representations (i.e. texts) into the classroom? And how can we bring out students effectively to make those texts their own?

I am here reminded of the remarkable example of Dorothy Heathcote's teaching. It's a teaching that is based on a deeply incontrovertible self-respect and dignity, as well as a lively folksy humour and a deep compassion, not to mention an intransigent respect for the integrity of a great text. Listen to Dorothy for a moment :

> "As an excellent teacher, I must not be afraid to move out of my centre, and meet the children where they are. The ability to go forward to meet people gives me the opportunity to vary my approach and my responses. If I do this, I shall not be afraid to try unfamiliar things, because I'm not afraid of being rejected. Rejection is not part of trying to meet someone. Even if some rejection must take place, let that be of the idea and not of the person. I think we - the teachers and the pupils - often feel rejected in the school when it's really our ideas that are being rejected.
>
> I must also have the ability to see the world through my students, and not my students through it. This ability can give a teacher a new perception, a renewal of energy and teaching style; there is a sort of regeneration when suddenly a class shows you a whole new way of looking at something.
>
> As an example of this, I might describe what happened recently when I was working with some young men in a Borstal institution. I was in the tricky position of making the

Borstal boys take the role of prison officers whilst their prison officers sat watching us. I hoped that the boys would treat my prisoner just as their prison officers had been treating them. So I became an official from the Bureau of American Indian Affairs, and I put them in charge of Ishi, the last surviving member of his tribe. Ishi really had been found earlier this century on a railway station, and the bureau had decreed this man - ill, sick, forlorn, speaking tongues nobody had ever heard - was to be put in the local jail until such time 'as he should be made city-like, and civilised'. Of course, the boys defied all my desires to get Ishi put in the jail. They said, 'You're not putting him in the jail. We'll build him a house.' And they built him one - without any windows. I protested at this, but they insisted, and I realised we were looking at the house from two different points of view : for them it gave privacy, and for me it was a prison. I'm still pondering why they did it. Perhaps it was something to do with the fact that he couldn't see out either made no difference. It was what I might do to him that mattered. To understand this, I had to look at their house through their eyes, not through mine.

But as a teacher who seeks excellence, I must also have the ability not to be lessened by my students, to withstand them, to use my own eyes sometimes, and be myself.

One of the ways of avoiding being lessened is to refuse to give back what the pupils give you, especially if they are unco-operative. So often, it is easier to play tit-for-tat and be lessened.

I must have the ability to withstand certain pressures. I must be able to say, 'I respect how it looks from your point of view but I'm not giving in, because I can explain why I want it my way'. It's often easier to let the children get away with it, because it's too tiring to keep battling on. But the real battle is for a higher quality of response; I feel this ability to withstand is to know something of the chastity of one's purposes.

The ability to resist is a little like the ability to withstand. While withstanding may be to hold the status quo, resisting is to demonstrate, 'No further! That's it!'. I've had to spend a lot of energy in my teaching to create circumstances in which I can resist without pain, either to me or to the class. All my strategies enable me to create a disciplined world, and to find ways of using power without its being my power. Frequently, I use the power of the subject to discipline a group : I say, 'It demands this of us' - not, 'I demand this of you'. By resisting people, you help them to find guidelines and boundaries which can begin to function for all of us. Sometimes these boundaries are painfully constraining, and sometimes these moments when one says 'No further!' are very risky. There are times when I know a group of children could just laugh me out of the room because, from where they stand, I am an idiot in an idiotic system. But then it's necessary to stand there saying, 'Why do you laugh and tear your own work down?' when it would be so much simpler to laugh with them, and get out of the room safely."

How then, in the event, did Dorothy bring a class of rather surly, rather alienated, rather bored adolescents to the point where they would engage closely - making really taxing demands of themselves - with the test Julius Ceasar? How did she bring them to cling so tenaciously to that ostensibly remote text, and to pursue it, dig into it, relentlessly, to realise it, to actualise its dynamic meanings?

She began by role-playing as the bar-maid of a pub, with customers (the pupils) who were almost as disgruntled as she was herself. In other words, she saw quickly 'where they were' and went beyond it. I quote :

> "I said, 'I wonder if anybody could come in here who was worse off than us?'
>
> And one lad thought a bit and said, 'Yes, a tramp could come in here; a tramp that's got nowt could come in here'.
>
> 'Do you want to be a tramp that's got nowt?'
>
> And he said, 'Ay'.
>
> And he put on a sacking coat, and walked up to the counter that didn't exist, and I reached up and have him a pint in one of the better glasses. He took the pint and had just begun to drink it, when I looked at one of the other lads and asked 'Now what made him come in here, into this gloomy hole? I mean, we're all standing here like cheese at fourpence and yet he comes in here. There's nowt to cheer him up in here.'
>
> And the tramp said something that was really to open all our eyes : 'All the other pubs have music.'
>
> An amazing new view - it was quiet in here! And at that point I said, 'Well, the reason it's quiet in here is because we're doing Julius Ceasar. We are, you know! And that's Philippi. And the bloody generals are arguing over eighty bloody drachmas. And it's you and me that's going to be fighting at Philippi.'
>
> And at the point, we became drunken soldiers just before Philippi. And, from there, we got on to the way ordinary private soldiers carry the responsibility for the generals who never come into the front line."

Thus, the pupils, having begun to internalise, through role-play, a sense of low-status powerlessnes, of being exploitable and used to serve someone else's ends - a role not so very distant from what informs much of the days of their lives - enter into the text, to look at those who have power and at those who would seize it. Thus they have established a strong and clearly defined foothold in the text and its action : they have become participant-spectators; they are inside some parts of the action, and outside others. Being partly inside, they are thereby cued into those scenes where they can only be spectators.

On another occasion, a class of not-emphatically-academic 17 year-olds had to read Pilgrim's Progress, because it was part of their examination syllabus. Among several roles, they became prisoners-of-conscience, as Bunyan himself had been. In a state of solitary confinement, unable even to move from their chains and desks (again, going beyond their normal schoolroom condition), they were 'allowed' to write in small notebooks with short pencil-stubs; thus they wrote their journals, letters, testaments, and teased out what exactly it was that they believed in, what it was that they would be prepared to endure in prison, solitude, even death for. Some observers might say this was surely a long-windedly oblique way of coming to a text. But this is to miss the point, which is that in these ways the pupils discovered not only remarkable concentration and energy - a genuinely internalised energy - but also very clear, internally realised, intentions about understanding the text. And this involves, not merely 'reading' the words on the page, but also (and this is what we want!) feeling, understanding, through reflexive thought, the passions and obsessions, the convictions and commitments that can be said to constitute Pilgrim's 'sub-text'. In a word, they felt it on their pulses.

To bring pupils to this quality of activity requires teaching skills of a higher order indeed, but what seems to me to be crucial is this : that when pupils engage in close reading with genuine zest, it is because they are doing it for reasons which they have made their own : the intention, the purpose, has become theirs. Good reading, educative reading of text is criterially and essentially an act of re-creation, and it's clear that the teacher can have a great variety of valuable roles to play in this - as nudger, as cajoler, as teaser, as elicitor, as educer, as provoker, as sharpener, as guide, as questioner, as devil's advocate, and so on. But it's clearly not good enough for the teacher to seize all the initiatives and reduce the pupils to note-scribbling, obediently conforming disciples. The teacher's task, therefore is to negotiate for certain collaborative relationships in which the work is productively shared : from moment to moment, hour to hour, and day to day, the momentary, hourly, daily role of the teacher is thus changing, shifting its emphasis, redirecting its thrust. Individual pupils will be recognised as capable of offering particular contributions, and the load of initiative, responsibility and challenge will be thrown, in varying degrees, onto various shoulders.

We face, then, a double challenge : we need not only a lively and attentive responsiveness to text, but also - and more importantly - an attentiveness to the text as coming alive, as taking shape, in the minds of our pupils. And that is a tall order, a strenuous act of equilibrist agility. But it's also what we are paid for, and we can expect nothing less of ourselves. We have to try to ensure that our pupils are involved in the creation of meaning; that it is their questions that are attended to; (we too often ask questions to which we already know the answers, and they not only exclude the pupils' question, but also pre-empt the decorum of our classrooms in such a way that the pupils slowly learn not to ask questions) and with a complex 'adult' text, we have to decide, not a priori, but pragmatically, which of the pupils' presently achieved meanings measures up to our legitimate expectations. Thus, again, the choice of texts is crucial. If our choice of text is inept, infantile, wide of the mark, or tending to the esoteric or to our own King Charles' head, then we are inviting trouble, confusion, dishonesty, or pretension. As James Agee observed forty years ago : (why is it, incidentally, that teacher-training institutions have so totally failed to recognise and honour Agee's wisdom?)

> "It would be hard to make clear enough ... in what different worlds, words and processes leave a teacher, and reach a child. Children, taught either years beneath their intelligence or miles wide of relevance to it, or both; their intelligence becomes hopelessly bewildered, drawn off its centres, bored, or atrophied."
>
> (*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*)

There *is* a continuity between nursery-rhyme and *King Lear*; between gossip and *War and Peace*; between 'Molly Vickers wets her knickers' and *All That Fall*; and it's the finer fibre, the subtler texture, of this continuity, this continuously fertile soil (to shift the metaphor), that we have constantly to recognise, delight in, draw on and exploit. Much of the best in Shakespeare came out of the backyards and furrows of Warwickshire. Or, as Edwin Morgan has so memorably put it :

> "There is a poetry before poetry - that is what I seem to see if I look back to my boyhood ... the imagination can be stirred in all sorts of preparatory ways .... In this context, there are things I remember most vividly : my uncle Frank, who had a good tenor voice, sitting at the piano to sing 'Pale hands I love beside the Shalimar' or 'Ramona' or 'Charmain', the strange longing filtering out over playing-cards, bobbed heads and cigarette-smoke; my father (who worked for a firm of iron and steel scrap merchants) describing on a long Sunday walk how steel was made, the whole process - lurid, fearsome, yet controlled, an image of power and force of words; looking again and again through a Victorian volume of my grandmother's filled with engravings of storms, wrecks and exotic atolls and icebergs, and stories of maritime adventure and endurance; probing wtih a torch under the bedclothes over sets of cigarette-cards like 'Romance of the Heavens' and being equally fascinated by the 'romance' and the scientific facts; ...."

Similarly, Seamus Heaney recalls his delight in the nonsense and voice (patterned noise, affective noise!) of street-songs :

> "A few months ago I remembered a rhyme that we used to chant on the way to school. I know now that it is about initiative but as I trailed along the Lagan's Road on my way to Anahorish School it was something that was good for a laugh :
>
> 'Are your praties dry
> And are they fit for digging?'
> 'Put in your spade and try,'
> Says Dirty-Face McGuigan.
>
> I suppose I must have been about eight or nine years old when those lines stuck in my memory. They constitute a

kind of poetry, not very respectable perhaps, but very much alive on the lips of that group of schoolboys, or 'scholars', as the older people were inclined to call us. McGuigan was probably related to a stern old character called New McGuigan who travelled the roads with a menacing blackthorn stick. He came from a district called Ballymacquigan - The Quigan, for short - and he turned up in another rhyme :

'Neddy McGuigan,
He pissed in the Quigan;
The Quigan was hot,
So he pissed in the pot;
The pot was too high
So he pissed in the sky;
Hell to your soul, Neddy McGuigan,
For pissing so high.'

And there were other chants, scurrilous and sectarian, that we used to fling at one another :

'Up the long ladder and down the short rope
To hell with King Billy and God bless the Pope.'

'Red, white and blue
Should be torn up in two
And sent to the devil
At half-past two.
Green, white and yellow
Is a decent fellow.'

Another one which was completely nonsensical still pleases me :

'One fine October's morning September last July
The moon lay thick upon the ground, the mud shone in the sky.
I stepped into a tramcar to take me across the sea,
I asked the conductor to punch my ticket and he punched my
eye for me.

I fell in love with an Irish girl, she sang me an Irish dance,
She lived in Tipperary, just a few miles out of France.
The house it was a round one, the front was at the back,
It stood alone between two more and it was whitewashed black.'

We weren't forced to get these lines by heart. They just seemed to spring in our minds and trip off the tongue spontaneously so that our parents would say 'If it was your prayers, you wouldn't learn them as fast.'

There were other poems, of course, that we were forced to learn by heart. I am amazed to realise that at the age of eleven I was spouting great passages of Byron and Keats by rote until the zinc roof of the nissen hut that served for our schoolhouse (the previous school had been cleared during the War to make room for an aerodrome) rang to the half-understood magnificence of :

> 'There was a sound of revelry by night
> And Belgium's capital had gathered forth
> Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
> The Lamps shone over fair women and brave men.
> A thousand hearts beat happily and when
> The music rose with its voluptuous swell ...."

I also knew the whole of Keat's ode 'To Autumn' but the only line that was luminous then was 'to bend with apples the mossed cottage trees', because my uncle had a small orchard where the old apple-trees were sleeved in a soft green moss. And I had a vague satisfaction from 'the small gnats mourn, Among the river sallows', which would have been complete if it had been 'midges' mourning among the 'sallies'.

The literary language, the civilised utterance from the classic canon of English poetry, was a kind of force-feeding. It did not delight us by reflecting our experience; it did not re-echo our own speech in formal and surprising arrangements. Poetry lessons, in fact, were rather like catechism lessons : offical inculcations of hallowed formulae that were somehow expected to stand us in good stead in the adult life that stretched out ahead. Both lessons did indeed introduce us to the gorgeousness of the polysyllable, and as far as we were concerned there was little to choose between the music with 'its voluptuous swell' and the 'solemnization of marriage within forbidden degrees of consanguinity'. In each case we were overawed by the dimensions of the sound. (Maybe it was a genuine poetic experience after all.)

There was a third category of verse which I encountered at this time, half-way between the road-side rhymes and the school poetry (or 'poetry'), a form known to us as 'the recitation'. When relations visited or a children's party was held at home, I would be called upon to recite. Sometimes it would be an Irish patriotic ballad :

> 'At length, brave Michael Dwyer, you and your trusty men
> Were hunted o'er the mountain and tracked into the glen.
> Sleep not, but watch and listen, keep ready blade and ball,
> For the soldiers know you hide this night in the Glen of
>   Wild Imall.'

Sometimes, a western narrative by Robert Service :

> 'A bunch of boys were shooting it up in the Malamute Saloon,
> The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a ragtime tune,
> Back of the bar at a solo game sat Dangerous Dan Mulgrew
> And watching his luck was his light o'love, the lady that's
>   known as Lou.'

While this kind of stuff did not possess the lure of forbidden words like 'piss' and 'hell to your soul', it was not encumbered by the solemn incomprehensibility of Byron and Keats. It gave verse, however humble, a place in the life of the home, made it one of the ordinary rituals of life."

When the mature writer turns reflexively reflective, and looks back on the evolution of his commitment to the act of reaping language and making images of life, he can thus tease out the deeper, subtler connections between the proto-language, the proto-art, of his early years, his pre-conscious life, his pre-conceptual experience, on the one hand, and the committed discplined craft of his high vocation, on the other; and he can, crucially, recognise and locate the disjunctions that threatened to break that deep continuity. Or, to put it another way, he can offer his life and work as one way of exemplifying the truth and the tact of Makarenko's insight : 'primitive sources of satisfaction must be steadily converted into more complex and humanly significant joys.' (The Road to Life.) Somehow or other, the poets manage to achieve such individuating self-conversion, growth, continuity, burgeoning; and so produce an art which, however complex or subtle, continues at some level to tap the energies that are there in those 'primitive sources of satisfaction'.

On this day, in between writing this paper, I spend the morning in a Sydney primary school with a class of nine and ten year-olds. Their passion for poetry is quite unbelievable : perfectly unaffected, omnivorous, and catholic; they relish salient features of language and form; are intoxicated with rhyme. It seems that anything is possible with, and for, such children. But who would dare predict that they will be reading their favourite poems aloud to their brothers, sisters, parents, aunts and uncles in five years' time, as they do now? Heaven forfend that they will be fractured in such a way that they turn from literature for five years or more, as I was, in the travail and weariness of grinding through the set books.

Perhaps in the 'eighties we shall be able to afford more recognition of the fact that our task is not simply to respect, and mediate, and foster 'complex and humanly significant' activities, but also to continue to keep in touch - 'the life of significant soil' - with the 'primitive sources of satisfaction'. But can we now even enumerate or recognise these, let alone positively sanction them? I hope, too that in the 'eighties we shall reject and/or transcend sloganeering : when 'basics' and 'discipline' are brandished like banners in a holy crusade, when 'pupil-centred' is set over against 'the heritage', we know that those who raise such garish flags are trapped in the banal categorising of their own insufficient and vulgar epistemology.

Meanwhile, I end as I began, with Judith Wright, and a whiff of irony :

> "Ladies and gentlemen, we are aware
> our report must be a disappointment,
> but we recommend you do not proceed.
>
> Ladies and gentlemen ....
>
> Ladies and gentlemen."

(Report of a Working Party)

ENGLISH, ORTHODOXY AND THE EIGHTIES

David Homer (AUSTRALIA)

On the last morning of the Literature Commission, during the Plenary Session, the following statement was read to delegates. It had been worked out by seven members of Group 8 over the two hours which preceded that meeting, and it makes a good starting point for a discussion of the work of the Literature Commission, of which Group 8 was a somewhat hefty microcosm.

> "Our aim in the Eighties will be to help students understand how and why a variety of forms of text are created. Our aim in doing this will be to help them to see how and why their culture is constantly being created and recreated. Our expectation is to help students perceive their place in the culture, interpret their experience of it, and acquire the means to change it. As Literature is authentic distillation of human experience it will play an important role in this enabling process, but to achieve these ends we will have to treat Literature in ways radically different from those of most current practice."

Clearly the statement shows signs of the haste in which it was put together. Had it been put to the Commission as a resolution, it is doubtful whether more than 20% of the delegates would have supported it. And there is no reason why they should. It is profoundly problematic in matters of definition ("culture"; "literature"; "text"), and makes political assumptions about the roles of pupil, teacher and school which would take ages to argue out. Nevertheless, it represents a response to many of the problems of the Literature teacher, now and in the future, that was missing from the mainstream of the Commission's work, except in Peter Moss's wise and interesting lecture.

By and large the Commission operated as though text exists only as words on the page, as though literature has never changed, as though the electronic and mass-print media have had no influence on literature (let alone teachers' and pupils' lives), and as though teachers of literature are merely, in the future, going to have to find ways of doing better in the areas in which they have traditionally operated. This is in no way to devalue what happened in the Commission, in Group 8, or any other group. All of the reports emphasize the personal and individual value that delegates took from working together on literary texts, and from their co-operative, friendly talk both in and out of sessions. But despite this, some delegates, at least, felt that at a Conference entitled "English in the Eighties", in a Commission examining "The Place of Literature (Including Children's Literature)", we exhibited some considerable blind spots. So while acknowledging that much of value was achieved, and that no Commission could examine everything surrounding the central theme in a week (i.e., there has to be focus), this report will draw attention to some of the issues which were ignored in Sydney, as well as commenting on what was actually done.

We might begin with the theoretical framework which informed and channelled our deliberations; a framework born in the mid-1960s which has been almost exclusively influential in shaping at least Secondary English studies in Australian schools during the 1970s. The reference, of course, is to the orientation of English according to ideas emanating from the London University Institute of Education, and associated with the names of James Britton, Harold Rosen, Nancy Martin and others.

The London Institute work has been concerned to direct teachers' attention towards two aspects of their children's work which are of fundamental importance to learning. First, by establishing a highly eclectic (in derivation) explanation of the functions of written and spoken language, the work demonstrates the importance of talk in learning. In particular it demonstrates how important are the first, tentative "expressive" functions of language such as occur in small group talk, how without them it is difficult for a person to move to more explicitly, structured formulations of the knowledge gained from new experience. Second, by focussing on the often inhibiting nature of the teacher, as assessor, as an audience for student writing, by emphasizing different modes of writing, the London Institute work provided teachers with the insights necessary to radically improve approaches to writing in school. There is no question that the work has made possible profound and beneficial changes to English in Education, and has gone a long way towards changing attitudes towards Language "across the curriculum" in Australia.

So why an unease about the use of such an accepted and successful linguistic/conceptual framework for the Literature Commission? The answer is complicated, and to give it means touching on a number of areas including the problems of the application of Educational Theory through Educational Systems, the nature of the London Institute "theory" in itself, the changing circumstances in which Education (and therefore English) finds itself at the start of the Eighties, and the possible need to redefine literature, or at least acknowledge that the nature of literature is changing rapidly. Let us first look at the task that the Literature Commission set itself: to examine "Response to Literature".

David Mallick's Introduction outlines the pre-Conference reading and other preparation which delegates brought with them - the reading and teaching of a story, transcription from the lesson discussion, and the reading of a number of articles which included James Britton's Dartmouth article Response to Literature, Douglas Barnes' Group Talk and Literary Response, Penny Blackie's Asking Questions and L.C. Knights' Literature and the Teaching of Literature. From the very start, the pre-conference work strongly channelled the Commission's thinking not only towards a particular linguistic orientation in the teacher's understanding and handling of "response", but also towards a distinctly traditional (i.e., partial) view of the nature of literature.

On the first day the delegates worked on three poems in groups of varying size and were asked to address themselves to a number of philosophical and methodological problems in the light of their discussion of the literature. While there was no compulsion to stick to the suggested agenda, the fact that the tasks had been done, and a programme set out meant that in general the delegates stayed in this general area, e.g.,

> "How can teachers encouraged more tentative personal response?"

and

> "What is the process by which students can be encouraged to move from a partial and selective response to a more explicit and formulated response?"

and

> "When is it useful to call for an essay as a form of response?"

and

> "What other forms can a literary response take?"[1]

Interesting, profitable questions for discussion no doubt, as Group 8 discovered. But hardly, in 1980, new grounds as the delegates' confidence in dealing with them suggested. Leaving aside the issue of whether what we were talking about is in fact "response" at all, which has been beautifully dealt with in Geoffrey Summerfield's Group Report, what the sessions showed was that delegates broadly shared not only common assumptions about literature and its nature and purposes, but also about the conduct, purposes and possibilities of talk about literature in the classroom. It is in our thinking about matters like this that the work of James Britton and his colleagues has been so profoundly influential, from 1970 when he writes:

> "What is important ... is to claim that the responses young people make to the books they choose to read form in fact the raw material of the maturer responses we covet for them eventually. The sensitive response to a work of literature we value ourselves is arrived at, I believe, by refining these earlier responses and not by stifling them."[2]

to 1979, when we read:

> "A move from the expression to the transactional will represent a reduction of the expressive element in favour of the referential in the service of a verbal transaction ... But quite other criteria operate in distinguishing a move from the expressive to the poetic - briefly, an increasing organization of forms to bring about a more complete formal "unity".[3]

The notion of beginning in the tentative, "expressive" modes of language in dealing with new experience (including literary experience) is fundamental to the approaches to English which have developed in the 1970s giving rise to such practical innovations as an increase in small-group discussion, the use of private journals in writing and so on. The notion strongly permeated Day Two of the Commission's work when we examined the transcripts and writing from the lessons on I Spy. In particular such questions as:

> "Which of our classroom strategies and attitudes can encourage a narrow, conforming response?"

and

> "Are we too interested in eliciting early, explicit formulations and not sufficiently alert to the possibilities of 'partial and selective' responses?"[4]

In examining these questions each group had a wealth of interesting material to study, of teachers and students talking with each other. For example:

> S.1 The way he describes the darkness makes it feel really calm and serene so that when his father comes your heart starts beating.
>
> T. Would you agree with K. that the darkness outside and the searchlight, and the dark room underneath ...
>
> S.2 Yeah, cos if you're in a room and its' dark it feels much more compact than if it's sunshine ...
>
> T. But how does that add to the end? What you call "the main part of the story", then? How does that make it more effective ... to have the other bit in the dark ... all right, it's more dramatic because you feel the lights and the siren and everything ... but how is that related to the main story about the boy and his father?[5]

Is this teacher insisting on a "narrow conforming approach"? Are the pupils' responses "partial and selective"? Again, the confidence of delegates in dealing with the material was most noticeable. It was familiar territory. A feature of the London Institute work has been the way it has made teachers interested in students' and their own talk, and how it has made classroom talk accessible to them by providing a means by which they can talk about it, and see in it how learning is taking place. As Pat D'Arcy, another writer associated with the London Institute work puts it, when describing the discussion of a group of boys about a poem:

> "There are the hesitations and unfinished sentences common to any discussion, but the talk flows easily, there is no sense that any individual is really having to struggle with language in order to say what is in his mind. Our impression is that individual comments are relatively brief because they are regarded by the speakers as contributions to a joint undertaking rather than as a series of monologues which set out each speaker's independent and 'total' response."[6]

This kind of insight has been reiterated many times in the influential literature of the 1970s, for example in the many papers of the London Institute/Schools Council Writing Project, and the valuable work of Douglas Barnes. There is no need to say more about "where" the various groups which made up the Commission "were". They were addressing themselves to problems and situations which had become familiar and crucial during the seventies, and if what was done at the Conference was to secure or consolidate the advances made during this period, then it was all very worthwhile. But at no stage did the Commission members have time to consider the likely demands and possibilities which will affect the work of teachers of Literature in the Eighties, and which are even now with them. Some of these were mentioned by Peter Moss's group, and by individuals from others. For example, delegates left Sydney without having considered the likely impact on their work of such diverse influences as the development of cheap offset printing, the impact of journalism on "serious" literature, the access of schools to television, not to speak of the nature of television as a shaper of culture. The Commission had nothing to say of the Literature teacher's role in an education which has to seek out relevance for students whose immediate future is the forced "leisure" of unemployment. These shortcomings were largely due to the literary and linguistic world view which was tacitly shared, and which was manifest in the framework for discussion which was established.

In short, an orthodoxy was abroad! It now is in order to examine the ideas and influence of the London Institute work for it constitutes an excellent example of how a particular theory (of literature, language, education, or whatever) can become Received Doctrine.

There is no doubt that ideas originating with the London Institute work have become widely influential at the highest levels of administration of, and dissemination of information on, English teaching in Australia. Countless documents, articles, conference titles and choices of visiting speakers bear witness to this fact. I have already indicated that they have generated deep and beneficial changes to the work of English teachers, even among those who have never read the work or heard of the writers. But it is instructive to consider briefly why the ideas have become influential.

Well, they're good. They work. There is a lot of help in them for teachers. An idea such as:

> "Children are commonly asked to write down information for a teacher who, they are well aware, knows it better than they do. Often there is the additional fiction that the reader is not the teacher ... but some vaguely perceived public audience. Of course, exposure to adult models of good transactional writing will be important: but children will naturally take from the models at each stage whatever fulfils a felt need; this is a far cry from the docile imitation of style and tone which produces so much lifeless posturing in school writing, [7]

particularly when presented alongside transcript evidence to show how the insight has been arrived at, is a powerful motivator of change. And evidence and example are features of this work, which provides new ways of examining the familiar worlds of children's talk and writing. Enough has been said already to emphasize the value of the work in instituting change in classroom procedure. At a theoretical level we are only beginning to tease out the potential suggestions that the "Participant-Spectator" model has to make for the teacher of literature. The whole area of the relation between the three modes of language use is rich in practical methodological suggestion, but while it receives attention in the more theoretical literature this is not an area dwelt upon much by those who have been responsible for the dissemination of the work in Australia. This may be partly due to an antipathy on the part of those originating the work to realise its potential to generate school procedures and materials, preferring as they did to publish discussion papers.

Second, the ideas arrived in Australia just before the boom in educational spending of the 1970s. Money was readily available to run conferences, provide overseas study leave, import speakers, and subsidise publications like Language and English in South Australia. The high levels of staffing needed to implement the ideas were available, and they meshed with the prevailing moods of child-centredness and school autonomy which existed at official levels. So, good ideas arrived with good times; this has not always been the case in Education. This may also help account for the fact that the ideas have been more generally, practically influential in Australia than the United Kingdom, where the period of contraction in Education began earlier.

The third reason for the ideas' prevalance lies with the working conditions and the relation to power structures of Australian teachers. Part of their experience of work is shaped by the fact that they are members of a large system of institutions (schools) and subject to the control of enormous bureaucracies. A consequence of this is that the individual teacher is tied into a communication system which is fundamentally designed to transmit orders and instructions, indeed is the main concrete manifestation of the power hierarchy in Education. This communication system works at many levels beyond post and courier services; it works through Gazettes, the visits of senior personnel to assess promotion candidates, through Departmentally sanctioned conferences and so on.

Such is the nature of the relationship between teacher and system that in teachers' perception anything "coming down the line" is potentially a matter which might affect their lives. In Australia it requires only a handful of senior people to become convinced of the value of an idea for it to become widely and authoritatively disseminated. Furthermore, the seminal ideas can become selected and distorted in the system of communication; it has already been suggested that by no means all the ideas generated by the London Institute work have reached classroom practice in Australia. In such ways has it become impossible for Australia's English teachers to ignore the ideas of James Britton and his colleagues. In such a way have they had their linguistic theories chosen for them.

If this begins to sound like conspiracy theory, it's not ... really. One of the London Project's most trenchant (though not necessarily accurate) critics talks about how

> the category names of the Project's models are used without explanation, or even quotation marks to distinguished them from accepted terms in linguistic or education discourse; - 'spectator role', 'participant language', 'transactional', 'expressive', 'sense of audience', - are trotted out glibly without reference to the models to which they belong. (Writer's emphasis).[8]

In this, at least, Jeanette Williams is correct. There is a vast difference between talking about the Participant - Spectator model of language functions in terms of its origins in the work of Sapir, Hymes, Moffett, Kelly, Harding, Langer, Polanyi and others (in other words recognising its generative creative potential), and talking about it as though its categories and terminologies have some kind of absolute value. But this, in practice, is what has happened, as an examination of the reports of, for example, the South Australian and Tasmanian "Language Across the Curriculum" Projects (both Education Department based) shows. These, and many other curriculum documents show how the London "theory" has become reified, cut away from its eclectic origins, and therefore from its potential to generate ideas for looking at language.

In his opening address to the Conference (as he had done in print, e.g. Language for Learning I, 1, 1979) we heard James Britton defending the work which has been so useful and influential. The thinkers and writers whose work fed and guided the development of the Participant-Spectator model are now arranged, laager-like, in its defence. It is easy enough to say that all theories have to come under attack eventually, as knowledge and ideologies change. But this is at best a partial explanation of what is happening, since the London Institute work has always had its critics. The writers and thinkers who were drawn upon to create the explanation of language functions which became known as the "Participant-Spectator Model" are now used not to provide rich suggestion, but to defend what have become categorical entities of language. Sadly, what in fact has happened is that as far as English teachers are concerned the "Model" is accepted as all there is to say about Language. Such is the fate of theory when embraced by institutional bureaucracies.

So at the beginning of the Eighties, at a time when all aspects of Education are suffering from contraction and its attendant conservatism, English teaching continues to pin its hopes on a theoretical base which is under attack from the very same factors. Even in its "Official" forms the work of Britton et al has a long history of support for innovation and improvement in English teaching, but what it has enabled us to do, really, is the traditional things better. I would like to finish by referring briefly to two aspects of English teachers' work where we are going to have to look for other theories to help us shape our approaches.

The first of these was dealt with by Peter Moss in his address to the Commission, Literary Culture, Media Culture, Student Culture. His concluding words contain the essence of the problem.

> Educational institutions must open up private worlds, through the encouragement of Personal Narratives, in order to ensure that the community makes culture. Without the Private Voice, Education and Culture lose in humanity. There are corporate groups, media empires and, shamefully, educational bureaucracies who will be quite content for such a voice to be stilled.

Moss argues that the Personal Narratives of adolescents (and others) have astonishing breadth and power, and also that their very nature is rooted in "things" like advertising copy, which represents dream; (and) both the connative language of Radio Current Affairs and the semiotic codes of T.V. Newsreels, which represent reality". In short, such narratives are "indicators of a literary form which illustrate(s) the fit between an historical phase and the cultural objects which reflect the period's shape". In an Educational environment which spawns documents like the C.D.C.'s Core Curriculum for Australian Schools this notion leaves English teachers with two alternatives. One is to accept the fact of corporate literacy, a literacy ultimately shaped by the electronic media in the interests of consumerism. Such a literacy will be clinical and efficient, and concern itself with modes of language which can be value-assessed in terms of efficiency and productivity. Such a situation would dissolve individuality and sense of the world of personal experience and may well eventually render obsolete the reading of Literature as an educational activity.

The alternative is to work in the direction Moss suggests; to use such media-shaped, yet still Personal writing to preserve the individual's role in the forging of culture. This would involve using what the media teaches against itself, in both critical and creative ways. And where are teachers to draw their theoretical bases for such work? It is doubtful whether our current orthodoxy is adequate for such a task, rooted as it is in a (however valuable, however eclectic) essentially pre-television literary culture. Teachers will need a thorough understanding of the whole culture-making nature and procedures of the electronic media, methods for analysing its forms of discourse, recognising its meanings and how they are created, and understanding both the motives of those who control it and the reactions of Educational policy makers to their increasing influence. Such work does exist and it would appear to be one major direction in which English teachers must push the theoretical basis of their work.

The second, related point, concerns the nature of literature itself, for not only have the media wrought profound changes on our ways of knowing and seeing (and "responding"), but their influence has changed the very nature of much "serious" literature as well. The novels of Joseph Heller, for example, show distinct influences of the cinema and television in their idiom and structure. In Australia so do the novels of a writer like David Ireland. And then there is the vast production of biographical and autobiographical writing, as well as documentary work such as Michael Herr's book Dispatches, about Vietnam. The interface between written-down literature and the media is no longer clear cut, it is irretrievably blurred, a fact which teachers of literature can ignore only at the risk of assigning themselves to irrelevancy.

Again these facts argue for much wider theoretical base for teachers of Literature. If English is to continue to concern itself with writing and reading then it must be realised that these activities will be occurring in a culture largely shaped by the messages of the electronic media which had shaped the perceptions of both student writers (and readers) and professional authors. The task is to forge such a relevant English, not to become teachers of courses in film or television study. There is a massive task of self-education involved in this process, and it must be self-education, not an absorbing of new orthodoxies, synthesized within and promulgated throughout Educational bureaucracies by some system of choice from initially valuable, but convenient seminal theories. As never before, students and teachers of literature need to control their own theoretical frameworks, and these need to be broad and generative, not narrow and atrophied. The statement which opens this account was the reaction of some members of Group 8 to the conditions under which they see themselves working in the immediate future. It should be noted that Literature is affirmed as central to the process of understanding the culture-making process which we see as our aim.

And finally, an apology to the members of Group 8. Some of its voices are not represented in this report and for this I am sorry. We were the largest party, often broken into sub-groups, and I doubt if we could have reached consensus on anything important in a week anyway. The ideas I have put forward here are tentative but having read the other Group Reports I felt strongly that something along these lines needed to be said. We were, after all, members of the Literature Commission at a Conference called "English in the Eighties".

NOTES

1. Literature Commission handout, pp. 4-5.

2. James Britton, Language and Learning, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972 edition, p. 266.

3. James Britton, Myra Barrs, Tony Burgess, "No, No, Jeanette; a reply to Jeanette Williams' critique of the Schools Council Writing Research Project" in Language for Learning, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1979, p. 29.

4. Literature Commission handout, p. 8.

5. Transcript provided by Group 8 member.

6. Pat D'Arcy, "Sharing Responses to Literature" in E. Grugeon and P. Walden (eds.), Literature and Learning, Ward Lock Educational, London, 1978, p. 146.

7. Schools Council Writing Project: Writing Across the Curriculum, 11-16, Why Write? Ward Lock Educational, London, 1976, p. 17.

8. Jeanette T. Williams, Learning to Write or Writing to Learn?, N.F.E.R., London, 1977, p. 12.

PART 2 :

TEACHERS TEACHING

A. Lectures - Some Theory

RESPONSE - BEGIN AGAIN

Margaret Meek (ENGLAND)

Between the exciting collaborative act of taking part in a conference commission and the solitary writing of the paper for a distant unknown audience lie the months of recurrent playing in one's head of the text that was first created for a particular audience on a given day. As the original listeners recede into my conjunct memory of Sydney '80, so I have to replace them by others who may not have known that, when he visited me in London in the Spring of that year, (autumn for antipodeans) David Mallick, the literature commission chairman, said that our topic would be 'response'. He explained his concern to reconcile the 'great tradition' view of the study of literature, the one generally associated with F. R. Leavis and his disciples, and the 'spectator-role' theory of D. W. Harding and James Britton, linked with the 'personal experience' approach attributed to John Dixon's post-Dartmouth study, Growth through English (1). David's concern was to explore how a rationale for the teaching of literature in school could join what he saw as the rigour of Leavis's textual exploration and the discipline of I. A. Richards' 'close reading', with a more personal, individual reaction to 'virtual experience', in Susanne Langer's sense (2). Because I heard, or thought I heard in what David was not saying, a fairly common longing to reclaim for literature its centrality in English teaching, I accepted the challenge - for challenges are at the heart of conference interactions - packed my bag and my books and set out.

Perhaps I should have been even more forthright than I thought I was in that pre-conference discussion, for I knew before I left that I could not do what David wanted. Between Dartmouth and Sydney there was York, and no one who was present at that conference in 1971 could imagine that a simple synthesis of these viewpoints, would be enough to send us confidently into the teaching of literature in the 1980's. It is no longer possible to look at literature, even if no theory of criticism or pedagogy is to result, without examining its place in the society and culture of our time. We learned that at York, and since then we have discovered, year by year, that if we want to address the question that David posed in his opening speech to the commission : 'What is there in the study of literature that is uniquely valuable', we are bound to say something about the ways in which language emerges from experience and fuses with it in social and cultural contexts of use and 'making'.

As a commission we were too isolated to do this well; we exemplified in our separation - across that busy road - the very problem we needed to tackle. We had too few links with those who were studying narrative and children's writing and we needed the time that it takes to become used to each other. It may have been that the conference isolated us, assuming that the literature and language division is neither natural or inevitable. It seemed all too difficult for us to shake loose from the idea that literature in school is a collection of texts to be studied by permission of the academic guardians of high culture, most of whom were elsewhere when the conference took place. Before we can reach any consensus about response - a concept notoriously 'soft' and rarely defined beyond the notion of individual enjoyment and evaluation - we have to be much more painstaking about a more fundamental examination of the very things about literature that we have taken for granted (3). A primary, even primitive definition of 'response' may open up one way into doing this, if only by showing us how various our concerns must be. Within a week of considering this topic I saw a three-year-old laughing at Where the Wild Things Are because, unaided, he had found a picture that reminded him of his grandmother. Next, a colleague brought a tape recording of her five year-old's retelling of the story of Hansel and Gretel in which he announced 'they were members of a not very rich family', a phrase encountered as text, not as utterance. I met a seven year-old who couldn't wait for the next instalment of a TV serial and therefore acted out his expectations with a host of imaginary characters. A nine year-old brought her fifth Enid Blyton book with her own pocket money; a twelve year-old and his friends composed a parody of the school song. A fifteen year-old burst into tears at the end of What Maisie Knew, and 6 seventeen year-olds sat up all night discussing a production of Hamlet that had the ghost scenes cut out, and the words of the ghost issuing from Hamlet with his back to the audience (4). Each of these is a response to the thing made and consists in part at least of the encounter of the hearer/readers' expectations of what that thing might be with what they made of it by listening or reading or saying. As the result of the encounter they became more experienced, more competent to distinguish such a thing again. Their response might have been to make something like it - to write a story or a poem, another of the same.

Readers, listeners and makers have literary intuitions that derive from literary play which, in its earliest form,is the topsy turveys that Chukovsky encourages us to prize highly (5) and from the primitive explorations by means of play, in the 'third area' defined by Winnicott(6). When the primary storying of memory and brain fiction (7) meets the Story of the shaping teller, then listeners and, later, young readers, young makers and young writers derive literary intuitions from the nature of the rhymes, jingles, word play, stories, verses and games that fill their lives. The lore and language of childhood is a genuine folk art demanding response. Thanks to the Opies we know what it is, but only occasionally do we ask ourselves why it has such staying power and what are its relationships to the basic emotions and basic needs of a group. We even forget to remind ourselves that whoever passes on the rhyme about 'I'm the king of the castle' to a younger sister or brother, becomes, in effect, the author (8). A whole world of metaphor, ambiguity, and, above all, disguise lies unexplored in the unofficial lore of childhood. From their earliest years children know what a story is. By the time they are ten they can identify a hero or a heroine, a villain, the archetypal features of comedy and tragedy, the 'sense of an ending' (9), a verbal joke, the difference between realism and fantasy. They are at home in a book or a story or a TV narrative, describing themselves as 'dark listeners' (10). The language of the story is both what the author wrote and the metalanguage by which the readers re-make the tale for themselves, what Culler calls 'the language of plot that is within us' (11).

We cannot really begin to understand response without a fundamental examination of the nature and the process of development of literary competences. We know about linguistic competences, thanks to Dell Hymes and others (12). But we have no extended studies of how children develop the grammar of the fairy tale, how they relate to, or internalize characters in a story nor how they see the world in a book. (Most of the evidence comes from psychoanalysis and enlightened guessing. cf Bettleheim's study of fairy tales (13)). We are far away from this because we have not taught ourselves to look for the kind of evidence that would help us. Certainly we believe with L. C. Knights that contact with literature can 'set free and foster the energies of the imagination', but my curiosity now makes me want to say, what does that look like when it happens before ten and after thirteen, when and how do children learn how stories will go? What makes them say they like one poem and not another? Am I really sure I know what a pupil's view of a poem or a play is from what I give them time to say? The answers to these questions are where people read and talk together. In school they abound in literature lessons, but we are so busy saying what ought to be children's evaluative responses that we rarely hear what they actually are, or we expect them to be in one form when in fact they are in another. How can I make a rationale for the teaching of literature unless I consider the context of the pupil's situation? And so it goes on. The more Fred Inglis says that literature teaches us to live well and George Steiner says that this is not proven, the greater David Craig's conviction that novels, plays, poems and films take us deeper into life than we can ever know at first hand (14), or the stronger we find Pierre Macherey's insistence that the significance of text is in its silences (15) the more we need to know about the conditions in which 'response' as such is to be judged.

Then, how can we look at children in school 'responding' to literature before we have examined the relationship of literature, once the privilege of the few, to literacy, the universally desired skill. Any account of literary studies as they have developed in school over the last ten years that takes no account of what is now known of language development, linguistic diversity, children's autobiographical writing (16), the extension of reading studies, even beyond the work of Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman (17), the growth of theories of narrative discourse (18), the cultural effects of television and film, the expansion of distinctive adolescent culture and the existence of literatures that are characterized as 'popular' (i.e. thousands of copies are sold) and 'for children', (i.e. the audience is specified) will be deficient.

My point is essentially simple. We can look at response in as many ways as there are people, young people, responding to things within our culture that call forth response. Until we have done more than ask questions about poems on the basis of 'guess what's in my head' we are not ready to categorize responses. One of the prevailing concerns of contemporary literary theory is to create a 'poetics' that will stand in relation to literature as linguistics does to language (19). Clearly we also need a developmental pattern of literary competences, the growth of knowing what a reader or listener or writer does to fulfil each of these roles in encounters with literary discourse that correspond to our studies of how children's language develops as they learn how to mean (20). We need, for example, both a poetics of literature for children and an exploration of the aspects of reading that are never actually taught, such as the nature of suspense, the time sequences in narration, the feelings-based metaphorical analogy, the nature of irony, and many more. Our failure to grasp the nature of response is a single symptom of a much wider ignorance: to know how the young become readers. When I think of this, I am reminded of the first puzzle that confronted me in my first week of teaching: how did my class of 11 year olds know and understand the story of Sir Patrick Spens, fully, completely, leaving nothing out, when they looked at the verse on the page and heard it read in a voice and dialect that would have confused them in normal speech, especially as the text itself leaves out the narrative connections?

If we are to say anything significant about teaching literature in the '80's we must move beyond the consolations of our accustomed philosophy to look in much greater detail at the scope of literary studies and the nature of the accompanying pedagogy. We can agree with D. W. Harding's Dartmouth statement that

> Most values are culturally derived, at their best they are the currency given to the adjustments to experience of the most sensitive members of society. Thus entering into the 'virtual experience' of influential works of literature, a child is offered a flow and recoil of sympathies that accords with the culture pattern in which he is growing up,

and act upon it, and I yield to no one in my admiration for its author. But sheltered as we are by convictions of this kind, we tend still to see literature as the fixed syllabus of the recommended texts chosen by those who see themselves as chosen to choose. Raymond Williams reminds us that

> "societies and literatures have active histories which are always inseparable from active values. But in literary as in some social, historical and anthropological studies, these facts of change can be projected into an apparent totality which has the advantage of containing them and thus making of them at last, like the rocks, stand still. In literature, the most common of these false totalities is tradition, which is seen not as it is, an active and continuous selection and reselection, which even at its latest point in time is always a specific choice, but now more conveniently as an object, a projected reality, with which we have to come to terms, even though these terms are always and must be the valuations, the selection of other men." (21)

Is this not a fair statement of the 'tradition' of English literature examination syllabuses in schools and universities? As long as these remain 'the false totality' we cannot study genuine response in either its social, its individual or its developmental aspects because we do not yet know how children read. We have deluded ourselves by refusing to shift from an assumption that reading is eternally the same, even when we know that we don't read an advertisement as if it were a poem, so poems have to be different from advertisements, or they may, as part of the way they are to be read, include the reader's awareness of verse about soap and fish fingers. Conversely, we cannot read Madame Bovary as if it were a sociologist's analysis of the French class system of the 20th century, for all that some critics have tried. A work of literature has structure and meaning because it is read in a particular way (22) and to teach literature includes the teaching of reading. For the reader to develop literary competences s/he has to learn the conventions of a greater range of literature than is ever 'allowed' into the corpus classical texts. As a result of our neglect of reading we find ourselves in a double classroom bind. The reading children can do - learned in the streets and from TV - has no acknowledgement in literature lessons, and the reading we want them to do - the books they 'have' to read - seems to be 'unavailable' to them (23), chiefly because they do not read as we do.

To make a pedagogy of reading in English lessons involves both literary theory on the part of the teacher and the evidence of what readers teach themselves. For example, I doubt if many children have ever been taught how to read a comic. This common currency of childhood reading carried with it the expectation that neither the pictures nor the text in the speech bubbles is sufficient on its own for the reader to understand the narrative. The reader learns how to read the text and pictures to make a plot. They learn how their attention is to be guided.

My dissatisfaction with unexamined terms of discussion, in this case, response, comes from two empirical sources. The first is from evidence supplied over a five year period of study of adolescents who were, compared with their school contemporaries, inexperienced readers. They taught me and their teachers that, in trying to make readers of them, we often neglected the very things that could have helped them because our own expertise in reading stood in the way. We underestimated their passionate storying, their competence in oral narrative. We did not understand that the list of the parts of a motor bike that lurked in a metalwork folder was being read as a poem is read. For a long time we ignored the fact that to evade what is to be read is also a form of response to it. The second source of evidence is the normal classroom practice of young teachers who ask questions and expect answers but never invite questions. If you change the conventional role of teacher and pupil, response becomes something different, especially for inexperienced readers who want to know exactly what it is about the novel or the poem that 'turns the teacher on' - a secret often well concealed in the general idea that literature, somehow, does you good. To these I would add my constant interest in pupils' boredom. "Miss, why do you have to make it so boring" is not only a criticism of the teaching, it is a response to the matter. Perhaps our close examination of response needs to begin with an anatomy of boredom.

ii

All responses to literature are personal, but they can also change. I read Emma about once every three years on my own account and as often with the young of both sexes. There is a quite clear sense in which I seem not to be reading the same text as I read when I was at school, yet clearly I am wrong. It is even the same book. We all know what has happened. Put alongside this the class discussion of a poem. Is there any disagreement about it? What is usually argued about? Tentatively, I suggest that it's about what the pupils see, and, usually, in the classroom, the teacher's seeing prevails. So if the teacher chooses the books or poems to be read, and instructs the class to read it so that they see it in her way, response becomes a consensus that first of all ratifies the teacher's choice of the work and supports her view of it. The examination system reinforces this system, which I would call old content and old pedagogy. Elsewhere it is called the great tradition. It is the privilege of a minority -

> "The minority capable of not only appreciating Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, Baudelaire, Hardy (to take major instances) but of recognising their latest successors constitute the consciousness of the race (or of a branch of it) at a given time. For such capacity does not belong merely to an isolated aesthetic realm; it implies responsiveness to theory as well as to art... Upon this minority depends the power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable part of tradition. Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than that, this rather than that is the direction in which to go, that the centre is here rather than there." (24)

This elitism, strange now in Britain, seems even stranger in Australia where you are bound to see the English past through your present experience. As Raymond Williams makes clear, Leavis does not let us relate our interpretation of the works of the past to the particular contemporary values on which they rest, to make the interpretation conscious by showing historical alternatives. We are particularly conscious of the effects of this elitism in respect of a Schools Council Survey of children's voluntary reading (25). A national questionnaire survey of 8,000 children followed up by interviews with 576 children in 34 different schools throughout the country. The list of the titles of the books was then divided up, not with the kind of rigour that controlled the statistical sampling, but by a subjective judgment of books into 'quality' reading ('where the involvement of the writer with his subject matter and his audience has been such as to generate a texture of imaginative experience which rises above the merely routine and derivative') and 'non-quality reading' (those whose production has been essentially a commercial operation, a matter of catering for a market). The result of judgements of this kind is to put out of court the reading of the bulk of the population as related to literary competences or to reinforce the notion that only the trained and sensitively literate can choose what is worth reading, and allow it in school.

The main problem of old content, old pedagogy is that it derives from the fixed corpus of classical studies which English, especially English at Cambridge, was to replace. The great tradition makes the study of literature difficult, and the procedures students go through in their study give the books value. It would be ungracious as well as innacurate not to admit that the close reading of selected texts, the great strength of Richards and Leavis, generated splendid teaching of a few selected pupils who continued a life-long love affair with literature. The teaching of English in universities has a direct effect on teaching of literature in school. But I doubt if this is what fills all those auditoria of our National Theatre every night, and a score of lesser halls outside the commercial circuit of Shaftesbury Avenue, or encourages

35,000 people to send poems to a national poetry competition. The cultural tradition also means that we have to keep on re-selecting our ancestors and linking them to our contemporaries.

This brings about new content, in school literature lesssons, the extension of what is to be read, acted, spoken in class. It happens when a teacher lets the children's books into school or looks for material under the heading of 'relevance' to the lives of the children. The emphasis is often on 'realism', or 'reality', so that contemporary issues of racism, prejudice and feminism are discussed in the context of 'To Kill a Mocking Bird'. The effect of this new content is neutralized by the old pedagogy of transmission teaching and evaluation of response in the formal essay. In class discussions, still largely teacher dominated, tentative and partial responses are praised: the pupil's experience is put alongside the events in the novel or the images in the poem; talk happens. But the essay is marked and assessed. The process of moving from the tentative to the formal is seen as a developmental one, where the formal must prevail in practical criticism and book reports as 'objective' response. New literary forms are rarely admitted, e.g. the radio play or the strip cartoon (not even Brétecher), because the pedagogy to deal with them is not part of the English teaching tradition.

New pedagogy can often grow in gardens of despair. Where a teacher is quite determined that her class, social strangers to the hazards of examinations, (you know that ours are still socially codified to a large extent) will not be beaten by the system, you will find the emphasis on the range of responses. Constrained by the syllabus to teach old content, teams of teachers now devise new pedagogy based on talk, rather than writing, and in so doing have abundantly demonstrated "the intelligence of feeling" (26). They also know that pupils who discover how to immerse themselves in a poem as a whole, to make connections between literature and their 'action knowledge' of life outside school, are those who write more expressively and well. Their responses have a totality that is lacking from the more piecemeal results of the old pedagogy of text construing and the nit-picking of individual lines and images.

The problem for teachers who tackle examination syllabuses in such a way as to validate a wider range of responses is a kind of unease that comes from letting the pupils do more of the work. If a group of children are discussing The Bully Asleep (27), what if they don't feel sorry for the bully at the end? Surely they are missing something that the teacher could point out? Who will draw to their notice the finer points of the author's seeing? The only convincing answers to questions like these come from listening to tape recordings of what children actually say in genuine response to even the most classic works. You discover that children's responses, and their discussion of them have their own kinds of vigour that make it possible to entrust them with the most sacred texts. There is an 11 year old's way through Nicholas Nickleby; it consists of reading as if it were a school story and then stopping before the end. The limitation of a teaching rationale based on old content and new pedagogy is again the limitation imposed by the false totality of the examination syllabus. In actuality, it usually limits a year's reading done by a class of 11 year olds to A Christmas Carol, Tom Brown's Schooldays, and The Sword in the Stone, or, in one case known to me particularly well, The Thirty-Nine Steps, The Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, and David Copperfield.

Essential to the new pedagogy is an understanding of the relationship of language and learning, especially in its developmental aspects. Responses can then come in many different forms. To a story there may be another story. A group response may be in drama, or in a different medium. Written responses to traditional content can be negotiated in situations of trust and tolerance. In one class I saw recently, the problems of Romeo and Juliet brought the Pope's legate to Verona with a threat of possible excommunication for both Montagues and Capulets. His reports to the Curia had more reality than many a traditional summary of Act I of the play. The other part of the class, cast as spies in the play of the Medicis, were exploring the chances for business exploitation offered by the situation and discovering which characters might be subverted. Not criticism? Well, the teacher wanted to see how the pupils (14 year olds) were mapping the events and assessing their relative importance. While his colleagues dictated notes, he got racy, committed encounters with the play, that in L. C. Knight's terms, 'bring thinking into being'. They were crude, brash, physical, scarcely tentative, readings of the play that were watched three weeks later, by a Stratford production which these school boys had almost predicted. What, after all, is a production but a reading? The teacher knew better than his colleagues, what his pupils saw. They could begin to shape the very rawness of these responses because they had a sense of the form of the play as a whole.

I wonder if we could gain or lose if we gave more attention to new content: new pedagogy. I recognise the crudity of these categories because I appear to conflate the study of literature with the teaching of it. The essential feature of what I call new pedagogy is that, as it proceeds, both teacher and pupils come to know what they are reading in ways that may help each other to define. There is no one way transmission of traditional literary wisdom from the older to the younger. Nor is there a false assumption that the younger reader is as experienced as the older one. The pupil meets 'new' text, the teacher re-reads 'known' text. Their responses extend each other's seeing. The teacher needs a reflexive awareness of the younger reader's stage of development and of her own.

To take this further I must now unhook 'response' from the psychology with which it is most clearly associated, that which suggests response comes as the effect of 'stimulus'. In school this usually means the work as stimulus: the essay or discussion as response, followed by the teacher's assessment in writing of the recorded response. The variety of children's responses could be, and should be, the beginning of the teacher's understanding not only of the children's reading but also of a new exploration of her own understanding. We know we cannot put the clock back and read Jane Austen as her first readers did; we belong to our own time and culture. So what are we doing in our latest encounter with Jane Austen? Here is Gabriel Josipovici:

> What every sophisticated reader (e.g. teachers) needs to recognise is what every naive reader instinctively knows. Most symbolic systems are not repertoires of meaning, but invitations to take part in certain kinds of activity. (28)

New content is not just another book list, but the culture in its widest sense. For us in Britain it is multi-cultural - high, low, popular, children's, and literature is part of all of it. The challenge is to find the folklore of contemporary childhood, its links with the past and its engagement with the lives children actually lead. In this way we shall do what Williams suggests, re-select from our tradition, and discover anew what makes works last in order to offer the possibilities of choice to those who will create the literature to come. This means that I take some delight in folk-tale, legend and myth and their modern derivatives. More easily than their elders, young readers link the tale of Sir Gawain with the Stone Book stories of Alan Garner, Paul Zindel's The Pig Man and Graham Greene's Dr Fischer of Geneva. Fiction, as Culler says, 'does what nothing else can do: hold together within a single space a variety of language, level and focus, points of view, which would be contradictory in other kinds of discourse arranged towards a particular end.' (29) Young readers know this as they read; they also discover it as they write. Their teachers take it for granted when they should, instead, discover how their pupils come to know it. The new pedagogy looks at the ways in which the young take up invitations to encounter different literary modes and how they read a range of genres. It includes the relevance of boredom and tentative trying out. It derives its psychology, not from the stimulus-response set of behaviourism, but from insights about play and its role in the development of literary competence (30). In play we improvise so that we can attend to the meaning of what we are doing rather than to the thing itself. Reading is the most economical form of symbolic play because we can enter into the widest possible range of activity, including 'playing with fire'; and the whole gamut of our feelings, without moving from our chair.

So the new pedagogy invites collaborative choosing, gives time to extended reading, generous borrowing and lending, invitations to take part in different kinds of activity as ways of responding. It rejects the notion that criticism is a persistent uncovering of secrets that less gifted readers need help to understand.

Too many literature lessons make pupils uneasy about the nature and quality of their responses when they should enhance their desire to encounter writers and writing or to write for themselves. Do you remember Graham Greene's assertion that the strongest single influence on a writer is the reading he does before he is fourteen (31)? And Auden, when he had described how he became a poet, said he had his touchstone for testing critics, including 'long lists of proper names such as the Old Testament genealogies or the Catalogue of ships in the Iliad; riddles and other ways of not calling a spade a spade; complicated forms of verse of great technical difficulty; conscious theatrical exaggeration, pieces of Baroque flattery like Dryden's welcome to the Duchess of Ormonde?' (32) If we set this as challenge to our pupils, would we accept protest as a legitimate form of response?

If we really want to make response the core of our rationale for literature teaching in the '80's, we must begin with what English teachers take for granted, with reading. Wolfgang Iser's claim that 'as a literary text can only produce a response when it is read, it is virtually impossible to describe this response without also analysing the reading process' (33) links with Culler's, 'to stress literature's dependence on particular modes of reading is a firmer and more honest starting point than is customary in criticism'. All I have added is what I said at the beginning, that reading has a developmental mode by which the young 'can read text as literature and then inquire what operation that involves.....Nor is one upset by the fact that the boundaries between literary and non-literary or between one genre and another change from age to age'. By 'age to age' Culler means different literary periods, but the same is true in the development of readers as they grow from five to fifteen, then to fifty.

My conclusion is very simple - hardly worth the trip you may say - that in looking for 'response' we have neglected other kinds of evidence of what literature teaching and literary theory could be in respect of the development of literary competences in the young. If we arrive at our conference for the '90's with some understanding of how readers become 'les propres lecteurs d'eux-memes', exploring reading to the limits of themselves, we shall not have wasted the decade that lies ahead of us.

iii

As I write what must be the final draft of this paper, Mr Murdoch is buying up The Times and its supplements each of which during the last months has devoted many column inches, even whole pages, to discussing the teaching of English in the University of Cambridge. Conflicting standpoints, chiefly the Great Tradition versus the European Encroachment, have brought professors down from cloud-capped towers into the market place of the media to discuss modern literary theory and its place in teaching. For a brief period, roughly the span of the coincidental appearance on television of Malcolm Bradbury's The History Man, English teaching was at the centre of what George Steiner called 'the climate of feeling'.

Although the Cambridge upheavals are partly personal and institutional, the broader question 'how shall literature be taught?' is being asked again throughout the English speaking world with a curious urgency. In these days of economic recession you might expect to find students choosing the strictly vocational courses that lead to scientific, technological, agricultural and medical qualifications. Yet hundreds of them want to study English as a humane discipline rooted in concern about what it is to be human, especially in relation to the nature of language, imagination, creativity in writing, understanding and the modes of 'response', however defined. This, as I understand it, was the theme to which the literature commission of English in the Eighties sought to address itself. In August 1980 I had little idea that some of the issues I hoped the commission might tackle would become, in the first month of 1981, a matter of public debate. It is a tribute to the prescience of our organisers.

REFERENCES

1. F. R. Leavis (1948) The Great Tradition, Chatto and Windus, London

   D. W. Harding (1937) 'The Role of the Onlooker' in Scrutiny, VI (3) pp 247-58, Deighton Bell, Cambridge

   J. N. Britton (1970) Language and Learning, Allen Lane, London

   John Dixon (1975) Growth Through English, 2nd ed OUP, London

2. Susanne Langer (1953) Feeling and Form, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London

3. I found this said by Frank Kermode in The Genesis of Secrecy, Harvard 1979 but my conviction about it derives from working with adolescent illiterates who had no expectations of what it would be like to be able to read.

4. Jonathan Pryce's Hamlet at the Royal Court Theatre, London, Spring 1980

5. K. Chukovsky (1966) From Two to Five, University of California Press.

6. D. W. Winnicott (1971) Playing and Reality, Tavistock Press, London

7. R. L. Gregory 'Brian Fictions' in The Cool Web, op.cit.

8. We take this so much for granted that when a tactful and gifted storyteller like Alison Lurie suggested it to a group of students their response was 'so what?' It's a good example of how, when we are prepared to examine in detail the first emergence of children's language we are unmoved by the origins of literary competences, chiefly because we are still ignorant of their developmental pattern.

9. Frank Kermode study with that title.

   Victor Suklovsky, 'La construction de la nouvelle et du roman' in Theorie de la Litterature, ed T. Todorov, Senil, Paris 1965.

10. Geoff Fox "Dark Watchers"

    in English in Education, Vol 13 No. 1 Spring 1979, pp 32-35

11. Jonathan Culler (1975) Structuralist Poetics, Routledge, London.

12. Dell Hymes (1971) On Communicative Competence, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

13. Bruno Bettleheim (1976) The Uses of Enchantment, Thames and Hudson, London.

14. Fred Inglis, David Craig and Gabriel Josipovici and Terry Eagleton have all written about the teaching of literature in The English Magazine, No. 4 *Literature*, London 1980

15. T. Eagleton (1976) discussing Macherey in *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, Metheun, London

16. The English Centre of the Inner London Education Authority has published the work of West Indian pupils called *Our Lives* with particular effect.

17. Notably in Culler, op.cit. David Lodge (1979) *The Modes of Modern Writing*, Arnold, London. R. Barthes 'Sur la lecture' in *le francais aujourd'hui*. 32 January 1976, revue de l'Association Francais des Enseignants de Francais, Paris

18. Harold Rosen in his paper for the commission on writing refers to Gerard Gennette's (1972) *Discours du recit*, published in English by Blackwell, Oxford, 1980

19. J. Culler Introduction to Genette, op.cit.

20. M. A. K. Halliday (1975) *Learning how to mean: explorations in the development of language*, Arnold, London

21. Raymond Williams "Literature and Sociology" in memory of Lucien Goldman, in *New Left Review*

22. Culler, op.cit.

23. P, Hobsbaum (1970) *A Theory of Communication*, Macmillan, London

24. F. R. Leavis (1930) *Mass civilization and minority culture*, in Cambridge

25. Frank Whitehead, A. C. Capey, Wendy Marden and and Allen Wellings (1977) *Children and their books*, Macmillan Educational, Basingstoke

26. K. Witkin (1974) *The Intelligence of Feeling*, Heinemann, London

27. John Wain.

28. G. Josipovici (ed) (1976) *The Modern English Novel*, Open Books, London

29. L. S. Vygotsky "Play and its role in the mental development of the child" in *Play* ed. J. S. Bruner, A. Jolly, K. Sylva, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1976

30. Culler, op.cit.

31. G. Greene, 'Beatrix Potter' in Only Connect, Egoff, S., Stubbs, G. T. and Ashley, L.F., 1969.

32. W.H. Auden (1963) *The Dyers Hand*, 'Making, knowing and judging', Faber, London.

33. Wolfgang Iser (1978) *The Act of Reading : A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

LITERACY CULTURE,
MEDIA CULTURE, STUDENT CULTURE

Peter Moss (AUSTRALIA)

This talk will be revolutionary, both paradigmatically and syntagmatically; at the macro-level and at the micro-level; as a narrative and as a discourse; as a discontinuity in the genre tradition of this conference and as a type of communicative event.

That is not a bad start in itself, is it? And you'll have noted that I use most of the decade's post-literacy teminology, examples of meta-languages which, paradoxically, in their rush to explain how their codes would reveal the way to concrete understanding of society and its cultural forms, instead pushed us further back to a greater cushioned dependence upon convention and tradition, on the one hand; and impelled us further into the profoundly non-traditional abstractions of mass media, on the other. However, what this decade of languages has demonstrated is that literature, in the traditional way in which we have understood it, and still do practice it in our classrooms, has lost its formal coherence. The basic genres and their conventions, with which we have concerned ourselves this week, no longer are widely used by professional writers nor are they any longer regarded as necessary, irreducible forms by book publishers. We have only to consider the new 'genres' of this century - streams of consciousness, anti-novels, autobiographical novels; found poems, concrete poems; some of modern theatre's near silences. You take my point. It is not too difficult to argue that our literature has become dissociated from the larger society which consumes it. Jonathon Culler gives us a small clue as to why this might have occurred. He argues that literature works because people have a "literary competence" analogous to the ability of native speakers to understand sentences framed in their native language. This competence only works, optimally, I suppose, when it relates to familiar codes. Late-twentieth-century literature, with its incoherencies and privateness; its emphasis upon despair; its determiend imprecision and lack of a common-sense reflection of human affairs, all these distort or confuse the codes. The makers of literature in this century, with a few exceptions, have turned their backs on the realities of men in society. Industrialism, which literature as we think of it, originally opposed, produced new fictions based upon the internal necessity of its own technologies. Television, radio, advertising, movies, mystery and adventure novels; these are the modern fictions which our literature has turned its back upon. And our professional world has been torn between the two cultures. In consequence, our practice is in disarray because the confusion of voices, themselves reflections of the dynamics of social and cultural change, has prevented the mind from settling upon anything which might hold out some hope of bridging the 'cultures'.

I take it that we all believe it necessary to engage the social and educational discontinuities in the western world in order to help our students develop some control over their own lives and over the codes of post-industrial media culture. I want, therefore, to examine for a moment some aspects of post industrial media fictions which get in the way of so much that we hope and try to do for students.

The most potent fiction-making process is that whereby the media turn everything into entertainment, sometimes dramatic entertainment. There are a number of consequences of this structuring principle of entertainment. Firstly, it denies Memory. As substitute, all media usurp certain literary conventions (irony upon irony!) and create semiotic conventions based upon mounting repetitions, songs, advertisements, programme situations, character stereotypes breathlessly new and age-less because replaceable and endlessly replaced. Underneath the surface newness everything is the same, even News. (A recent and well-received National Australian Broadcasting programme, surveying and summarising the decade of the 70s, began each yearly segment of recordings with a scene-setting catalogue of disasters. The following, year-introductions show neatly that contemporary history media-style, has become dramatic entertainment, a re-lived suspense ...)

1973	President Nixon denied all knowledge of Watergate; Vice President Agnew resigned in disgrace, Lyndon Baines Johnson died, so did Noel Cowerd, Pablo Picasso and David Ben Gurrin. France exploded a nuclear device at Muratoa Atol; war broke out between Israel and Egypt; the Allende government was overthrown in Chile ...
1975	1975 was the year of constitutional crisis in Australia. It was a year for notable deaths - Chiang Kai Chek, P.G. Wodehouse, Harile Selassi, General Franco, Julian Huxley. Ms. Ghandi declared a state of emergency in India ...
1976	In 1976 the bloody riots in the black township of Soweto near Johannesburg, were closely followed by the return from exile to Rhodesia, of Bishop Abel Musarewa. Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden announced their separation. Vietnam was officially re-unified; and Israel carried out a daring rescue of its citizens at Entebbe Airport in Uganda. Ulricha Meinhoff, one of the most feared urban guerrillas in Europe, committed suicide in prison. The year took its toll of famous people, Chou En Lai, Agatha Christie, Paul Robeson, etc.

This morbid agenda of social and political comment suggests, with a depressing terseness, how so-called serious programmes obliterate the need for memory. The medium's own signs, quickly learnt by the regular audience, develop a programmed recognition of events. Their multi-layered fictions make memory, with its attendant private skill of selecting the significant detail, redundant.

I've dealt with this aspect of media because the denial of the faculty of memory, central as it is to media logic, works against a central humanising tendency which many of us find in the literature which we personally value. The novel, at its best, allows the reader two gifts. Firstly, complicity in a full, complex world of motive and action. To enjoy fully and to appreciate strongly the realisations of that interplay the reader needs memory in the basic sense of recollection and recall. There is also a more profound memory function in novel-reading - that which allows the reader to interpret silence.* The narrative structure in the novel is a way of talking about the world but that structure can also force the reader to reflect upon what is not said. There are junctures in all novels when the author, in a sense, stops narrating, when he steps aside and allows the text to stand alone, to speak for itself almost. At those junctures, a sub-genre is imposed on the narrative, not monologue (the text speaking for itself) but dialogue with silence (the reader engaging with things un-said). Let me demonstrate this by reading this short passage from 'Middlemarch':

> "Bulstrode, who knew that his wife had been out and had come in saying that she was not well, had spent the time in an agitation equal to hers. He had looked forward to her learning the truth from others, and had acquiesced in that probability, as something easier to him than any confession. But now that he imagined the moment of her knowledge come, he awaited the result in anguish. His daughters had been obliged to consent to leave him, and though he had allowed some food to be brought to him, he had not touched it. He felt himself perishing slowly in unpitied misery. Perhaps he should never see his wife's face with affection in it again. And if he turned to God there seemed to be no answer but the pressure of retribution.
>
> It was eight o'clock in the evening before the door opened and his wife entered. He dared not look up at her. He sat with his eyes bent down, and as she went towards him she thought he looked smaller - he seemed so withered and shrunken. A movement of new compassion and old tenderness went through her like a great wave, and putting one hand on his which rested on the arm of the chair, and the other on his shoulder, she said, "Look up, Nicholas".
>
> He raised his eyes with a little start and looked at her half amazed for a moment: her pale face, her changed, mourning dress, the trembling about her mouth, all said, "I know", and her hands and eyes rested gently on him. He burst out crying and they cried together, she sitting at his side. They could not yet speak to each other of the shame which she was bearing with him, or of the acts which had brought it down on them. His confession was silent, and her promise of faithfulness was silent. Open-minded as she was, she nevertheless shrank from the words which would have expressed their mutual consciousness, as she would have shrunk from the flakes of fire. She could not say, "How much is only slander and false suspicion?" and he did not say, "I am innocent".

---

* See, The Silence of the Novel, part 2, by John Preston, Modern Languages Review, Vol. 74, April, 1979.

Eliot sems to consciously invite the reader to make the silent dialogue by that first paragraph which, though setting the scene for the interview, gives the reader a feeling of being suspended rather than being drawn into what ought to be a profoundly relational dramatic episode. In the harrowing colloquoy which follows the only spoken words are Mrs. Bulstrode's "Look up Nicholas" itself an almost graphci sign to the reader, forcing us to create for the characters, expression, gesture, bodily stance. For the rest, Eliot's stark, actual, yet dense moral sketch is a theatre of shadows and silence into which the reader pours dialogue out of his own judgement - yes - but also out of his own private social and moral history - lightning flashes on blankness. And those lightning flashes are unprepared; are reflections of spontaneous engagement at the moment of reading. But they reflect a personal structuring out of deep memory.

You'll have got my point. In order to partake in that silent dialogue the reader needs much more than the signs of the print-medium. He needs a moral and private universe, bristling with doubts and certainties, in order to meet and contend the narrative silence. Those doubts and certainties are offshoots of human experience learnt in life and through the energy of thought. The supple transformations on reality, which memory makes, are made possible through the variousness of experience, accompanied by a coherent and steady sense of self.

Media, which obliterate social variousness and the solid sense of private character in favour of the conventions of sameness and the general signs of interchangeable experience, produce in the teaching context the potential, increasing as the years pass, for dislocation at the engaging-points in the growing mind of adolescence.

The second tendency of the entertainment principle of media is that which incorporates private experience into the world of media events. This is a subtle matter because the evidence, whilst easy to define and locate, is nonetheless slippery of apprehension in media contexts - slippery because so much happens around single events. Before one can settle on a developing attitude; a feel of sympathy; a moment of insight, the situation is obliterated as the next item demands our attention (there are no silences in the technological media).

I'll illustrate this view of incorporation with two straightforward examples from widespread radio methods which have connections with our interests in literary texts.

My first example is taken from a standard Current Affairs interview. It is between a retired missionary-lady and an ABC reporter discussing the plight of Aborigines in an area of Queensland.

> Part A
> Presenter
>
> While the Arakun Aborigines continue their battle with the Queensland Government one woman who, perhaps knows better than most Australians, fears that unless they win they might die out. For 40 years, until 1965, Mrs. Geraldine McKenzie worked as a missionary with her husband, Bill, and they were, at the time of their arrival in 1925, some of the first white people to meet the Arakun Aborigines. Mrs. McKenzie told some of her experiences to Peter Jefferson.

A

Mrs. McKenzie, how well do you know the people in Arakun; how close did you become to them in 40 years as a missionary?

Mrs. McKenzie

I think I got very close to them when we went away from the mission station, and lived in the bush. We did that twice in our early years. We went on horseback down the Reserve, there was no other way to go then, there were no aeroplanes to fly about in. We didn't dream of aeroplanes 50 years ago. And we went on horseback and we camped in their camps with them; went hunting with them on a wallaby drive and we went fishing and we had wonderful camps with them on the Gulf Beach in the moonlight and shared the fish and the turtle which they had been hunting.

B

Can you describe the relationship? What did you talk about? What were you interested most in?

Mrs. McKenzie

Well, I was most interested in getting them to talk to me about the way they looked at things, they're the things I remember. Now, we know in their wild state that they went nude, and many people thought they were shameless. But they had their own Mrs. Grundy, I discovered ... Some old woman had come in from the bush and I said, What's she like"? My informant said, She is a very old woman, mother, she's very strict with us young women. When we sit with her and she sees a young man coming she says, "young women! look down, there's a young man coming".

Part B

C

Well, if we can come to the present day though, How well do you think Mr. Bjelke-Peterson is faring with the aboriginals. Do you think his approach is the right appraoch based on your experience there?

Mrs. McKenzie

No. I wouldn't think it was, because he won't listen to them. He's got his own ideas about things.

D

How do you personally feel about the negotiation and the confrontations that's going on up there at the moment?

Mrs. McKenzie

I feel very troubled and I do hope things come out right for the aborigines because I feel that it could be genocide for them ... if they don't die physically, they'll die mentally ... spiritually ... their lives won't be worth living.

E

These are very strong words though. That's a very strong prediction ot make, isn't it?

Mrs. McKenzie

Yes, but it has been made before, I'm not the first to make it. I didn't just think it up myself.

F

But how would that happen?

Mrs. McKenzie

An aboriginal has something in his make-up that we haven't got. They even say, "I'm going to die!" And they do die.

G

And that could happen?

Mrs. McKenzie

I think it could, yes, (long pause) Perhaps not to every one, but to many and to some of the best of them.

The lady embarks on a personal narrative which is interesting in itself (it holds us because it is full of sharp, if understated, detail) and which allows the reader/listener to engage the silences, silences akin to that which the novel makes.* But her private, recollected narrative, located in authentic lived experience is too potent for the ephemeral drama of the medium. The journalist abruptly forces her to change direction - "Well, if we can come to the present day, though" ... In his 'D' question he reactivates the presenter's enquiry of a senstational interview by using the directing word "confrontation", which triggers the lady's troubled concern and her genocide speculation. The journalist has now got what he wants and he endeavours to keep her focussed on that abstract drama (Segments, E.F.G.).

The attempt at incorporation is obvious but, blessedly, this lady makes her presence felt to the end. Her last comment has a chilling, echoing finality about it which brings the listener hard up against the authenticity of one woman's experience. The incorporation has not fully succeeded because the centre of the lady's narrative is defined by a special knowledge and by sources of feeling which the medium cannot completely overlay with the inauthentic, engineered drama of either conflict or of rhetorical tension.*

---

* The difference between these silences and the ones I analysed earlier is that between dramatic narrative (in the possible events on the beach in the moonlight and the details of talk among the young women), and moral discourse (in Middlemarch).

My second example is from the Talk-Back format and it represents the 'heaven' and the 'hell' of that genre.

> Caller:
>
> I'd like to talk about Patrick Steptoe. He was my gynaecologist in the U.K. And I know there's going to be a lot of criticism about this man and what he's done. But I would like people to know that he's not only a brilliant gynaecologist but he's a great human being.
>
> Host:
>
> Why would there be a lot of adverse or critical comment?
>
> C:
>
> Well, I think there already has. I heard on the news this morning that certain people are criticising him - Churchmen and things like this.
>
> Host:
>
> Well, I don't know - uh - you know, Churches can't play God anymore than gynaecologists can play God.
>
> C:
>
> No, they can't. But also there was a comment from a spokesman in London. He seemed to think that the $1,000,000 dollars that was spent could have been spent curing people. But surely, this is a cure too. There are thousands of women that really will bless him for this. And he has so much thought for his patients. I don't think he did this as an experiment. Knowing the man as I did, I think that he would be upset having to tell so many women that they would never be able to have children. And I think that he would do this just to help these people.
>
> H:
>
> Can I pry a little bit and ask you your troubles that took you to this particular gynaecologist, were they the same as this?
>
> C:
>
> No. They weren't the same. I just had operations. That's all. Under him. But I saw him with his patients and he really felt for them, you know?

---

* A good example of the way this lady's narrative conforms to aspects of literary narrative is the pause in her final contribution. It is a silence which both invites audience to make narrative and which confirms her own commitment. It is a space of text where words cannot grow, a movement of terrible vision (for her) at the edge of the unknown. Radio and Television never invite that kind of complicity in the Audiences.

C:

(Some surgeons, they just treat you as animals). But he really cared for his patients. I've seen him many times, when he couldn't help anyone, almost in tears. And I think this is the reason that he did it. It wasn't for publicity, or experimental reasons at all. And I'd like people to know this before they start criticizing.

H:

Well, I'm glad you called.

C:

Thank you. Would you play a request for me that's so appropriate?

H:

Of course.

C:

'Dream the Impossible Dream'.

This represents the 'heaven' of the type because it is quite typical of a kind of Radio which offers anonymous people the opportunity to make narrative or text or cultural meanings. This lady is attempting to share personal and cultural judgements out of her own past experience and in that context her contributions represent a particular kind of narrative (The Experience-Tale for didactic ends). You will have noticed that the host plays little part in the interaction; the caller systematically creates the text.

Her final contribution, the 'hell' of the narrative, however, has the effect of placing over her earlier comments a cloud of doubt as to the authenticity of the impulse behind the creation of the text. That 'show-biz' reflex makes us re-direct our gaze back at the text in order to reassess. That reflex provides the listener/reader with the code to read the whole narrative. It is the entertainment code-of-human-sentimentality. Every speech of the lady has a coded focus, an indicator which gives us a connotative structure of feeling. In sequence, the crucial comments are,

"... but he's a great human being";

"And he has so much thought for his patients";

"... and he really felt for them, you know";

"I've seen him many times ... almost in tears";

"... play a request for me that's so appropriate".

Obviously it is not possible to claim that Radio or T.V. codes are responsible for this lady's significant language but it is a narrative that mixes, in such a relaxed way, media culture and private experience that one can be confident of the potency of the contribution which the public media culture must have made to the lady's private meanings.

Let me pause in order to confirm what you are all thinking about. I've accepted that for people at large, the idea of literature which we hold is dead; that the fictions of the imagination have been overtaken by the fictions of media; that within those fictions a place has been created for individuals to present their own texts; and that media attempt to incorporate private, individual experience into their predominant fiction, that of the categorical-culture-imperative of entertainment. In the final section of this talk I want to present some ideas about literature and about how we might incorporate personal narrative as a literary genre - of value in its own right, but essentially in order to create a necessary opposition to the incorporations of media.

For most of this week we have discussed the classic-type genre literature even though our teaching practices introduce other kinds of texts - journals, diaries, probably speech-genres as well. Why is it that we have so naturally accepted the conventional categories as marking the perimeter of our field? The answer is probably that conventional literary genres have been institutionalized as a cultural mode and it is because they exist in this way that they function as writing models. In particular, readers develop expectations of what constitutes "literary writing" and these expectations come about through school; corporate business decisions, in the selections which publishing houses decide to promote; even through social gossip. Institutionalization of cultural modes implies a close fit between an historical phase and the broad cultural objects which reflect the particular era's 'inevitable' shape.

If we take the development of the novel as the locus classicus of modern literary history in its relation to industrial society (and impressive theories have been developed which trace various routes of that connection), then we have to ask the question, given the facts of twentieth century literary form, "What are the genres appropriate for post-industrial culture or post-industrial media culture? Even to being the process of answering this question I shall have to make a large assumption of value - that, making narratives, sometimes fictional ones, is an important part of individual psychic life, and collective social life, and that this impulse is directly related in some way to the values and concerns of society.

It is possible to argue that a central tendency in post-industrial culture is for the ideology of consumerism to be self-policing i.e.* the fictions, and the narratives which frame them, (things like advertising copy, which represent dream; both the connotative language of Radio Current Affairs and the semiotic codes of T.V. Newsreels, which represent reality) are capable of creating, servicing, controlling not only their own nature and growth but also important value-reflexes of Audience. You'll note that I include in Consumerism not merely product diffusion, and the creation of want, but also the creation of a need for drama-in-everyday-life, as determined by the media dissemination of selected cultural and political events.** Within 'the drama-of-everyday-life' a very important development has taken place which is a direct result of popular mass communications. This has been the transformation of the potential-for-drama in society.

---

* See Frederic Jameson, Ideology, Narrative Analysis and Popular Culture, Theory and Society, 4, 1977, pp. 543-559.

** This self-policing tendency can also be seen in the 'Culture Arts' in the nexus between event and, say, book; its corporate financial sponsorship; its production or publication; the film of the book/book of the T.V. series/ song of the month/beautiful people event of the decade, who, themselves, help to create the Audience desire for more facts of art.

The centres of tension have moved away from the personal, the local and the traditional to a range of things presented in various and shifting formal categories. Of course, the dramatic potential has enormously increased. Indeed, in our current cultural phase we are led relentlessly to the conclusion that Life is Drama viz

(i) The daily newspaper headline bill-boards which litter the streets, couched unchangingly in the language of resounding extremes

(ii) The seductive imperatives of shop-front advertising

(iii) The theatrical and dramatic scenes of T.V. and radio copy, especially for beauty treatments.

(iv) Soap Operas and thrillers.

(v) Debates between political opponents; between establishment figures and particular pressure groups.

(vi) The nightly lists of news items.

(vii) The frisson of wondering whether you will be declared redundant next week.

The point about all this is that Experience is dissolved to the surface shape of the sub-genres (above), and is fixed by the dramatic imperative. In consequence, personal experience is, by implication, denied significance and in broad cultural terms, this means that the words of individuals are denied significance. That eventually reduces us to silence. I want, therefore, to make a plea for our creating a new 'genre' for serious study - that of student narratives. This 'genre' is an appropriate one for beginning the process of critical engagement between experience and culture.

I have a very simple and practical reason for suggesting that this might be a sensible way of reducing the size of that large group of students who don't respond with ease to our literary verities; and that is, that for adolescents in urban society what sociologists call Reference groups and Membership groups are more important than any other social mix.

A more complex reason is that there is so much impressive written and spoken narrative which adolescents make that it behoves us to take it seriously and to use it structurally in our programmes. I use the word 'structural' because I believe that such material should be an important component, and I think that there is, potentially, sufficient variety in the 'genre' for it to be a building block. My own view about these kinds of texts is that they are valuable in their own right, often are examples of moving, occasionally profound, personal or cultural statements and that any teacher worth his or her salt should be able to use them with the large majority of students at appropriate phases in adolescent development and at sympathetic junctures within the learning environment of all classrooms.

In the past there has been a tendency to disparage personal narratives, private writings, because they have been viewed by many as merely emotional outpourings. I acknowledge the truth of that fact and shout, "hooray" - if adolescents can write about their feelings then we've ideal material to teach from and, eventually, to turn into more varied ranges. But, that aside, I can accept the force of that criticism, at least for the available evidence of ten years ago. The evidence, now, is very different, much more various and, at one level, and sadly so, more complex.

What I have been able to detect over the past few years is a much more aware view of the world in a lot of students' writing, an awareness of social and cultural complexity which I find astonishing. It is indicative of a knowledge of contemporary culture, even an internalization of media styles, and the ability to use them with point. And this opens up a fascinating possibility for us. The narratives which I shall present offer clear, if tentative, indicators of a literary form which does illustrate the fit between an historical phase and the cultural objects which reflect the period's shape. These narratives have all the elements of media culture, elements which entice into easy acceptance but all hold firm to the things which media try constantly to dissolve or to incorporate - the points of tension between private experience and social or cultural wider worlds. In a sense these narratives present us with growing-points of literature and, more importantly, offer unique opportunities for students response because the genre material is 'coded' by adolescent universals and is recognised by them.

I'll quickly show you what I mean. First, a piece from ten years ago, a found letter in the most literal sense (an anonymous letter accidentally found, placed in the back of text book.)

> Dear Folks:
>
> Thank you for everything, but I am going to Chicago and try and start some kind of new life.
>
> You asked me why I did those things and why I gave you so much trouble, and the answer is easy for me to give you, but I am wondering if you will understand.
>
> Remember when I was about six or seven and I used to want you to just listen to me? I remember all the nice things you gave me for Christmas and my birthday, and I was real happy with the things for about a week at the time I got the things, but the rest of the time during the year I really didn't want presents. I just wanted all the time for you to listen to me like I was somebody who felt things. But you said you were busy.
>
> Mom, you are a wonderful cook, and you had everything so clean, and you were so tired so much from doing all those things that made you busy; but you know something, Mom? I would have liked crackers and peanut butter just as well - if you had only sat down with me a little while during the day and said to me: "Tell me all about it so I can maybe help you understand."
>
> And when Donna came I couldn't understand why everyone made so much fuss because I didn't think it was my fault that her hair is curly and her teeth so white, and she doesn't have to wear glasses with thick lenses. Her grades were better, too, weren't they?

If Donna ever has any children, I hope you will tell her to just pay some attention to the one who doesn't smile very much because that one will really be crying inside. And when she's about to bake six dozen cookies to make sure first that the kids don't want to tell her about a dream or a hope or something, because thoughts are important too to small kids, even though they don't have so many words to use when they tell about what they have inside them.

I think that all the kids who are doing so many things that grownups are tearing out their hair worrying about are really looking for somebody that will have time to listen a few minutes and who really and truly will treat them as they would a grown-up who might be useful to them. You know - polite to them. Ifyou folks had ever said to me, "Pardon me", when you interrupted me, I'd have dropped dead.

If anybody asks you where I am, tell them that I've got a lot of things I want to talk about.

Love to all,

Your Son.

It is a piece which looks back and reviews certain events. I holds our attention, at least superficially, because it locates examples in the familiar and because the personality projected is that of the ordinary-insignificant, a loser, but not a defeated loser. But the sense of self is seen only as an object acted upon either by people or by accident. All the felt cliches of adolescence are present,

> "I was somebody who felt things"
>
> "Start some new kind of life"
>
> "I couldn't understand"
>
> "that one will really be crying inside"
>
> "treat ... as they would a grown up"

but it is feeling in a vacuum. Despite the familiar objects there is no sense of place or time. It is a fair early-version* of media melodrama, but superior, and more authentic to the human world because the writer is choosing his own resolution of the tensions.

Compare that with a poem written 3 weeks ago by a fourteen year old boy, a "low-achiever", unmotivated, silent.

---

* It is also a special kind of dailague with silence, a dialogue with the generalized-other' of G.H. Mead. See Mind, Self and Society, Chicago, 1934.

The Computer Age

The computer age is here,
They will soon control the world.
Clicking, Ticking, Buzzing all the time,
Taking the role of man,
the inventor of the technological scrap of metal.
It goes straight to the point,
no hesitation.
just giving out complex sentences.

I don't know what I'll do with my life,
get married, be a husband, and have a wife.
I hope I have the courage to win,
and pass my thoughts to the children,
if I live to tell them.

Will I have a job,
this I do not know.
A doctor takes care of your head,
A policeman catches crooks,
The undertaker takes care of the dead,
An author writes books.
A jeweller sells watches and rings,
An artist paints pictures,
An inventor makes things,
A vet takes care of nursing bitches,
but I can't do these things.

Will I be a bludger,
Doing nothing all the time,
resting in happiness when I take some dope,
Or will I be a Psychopath
and put my head in the noose of a rope.
Killing myself without fear.

The country is corrupt.
They don't let me see the government,
so I can do something about this corrupt world.
They say I'm trying to conspire,
no talking, no letters, no phonecalls,
until I retire,
Into the world of no return.

Life is not worth living,
the ultimate war is sure to begin,
when it does, all will join.
Bombs will be dropped,
guns will be fired,
All because of greed for wealth and power.
There we shall fight,
There we shall die,
No-one will survive.
Only the computers will be left.
and when they have the knowledge of God,
the Adam and Eve story will start again.

That bleak world-vision composed within this boy's silence, impelled by a jarring psyche, and despite the surface awkwardnesses and reflexes of adolescent despair, is a narrative of cultural power because it confronts our powerlessness. The human world he depicts is recognizably our world 'though I suggest that his realisation of contemporary gadgetry is sharper and more toughly ironic than many of the views which we hold.

Finally, a British example, already published, which some of you will know.

Well, I mean, he had the chance didn't he? *

Elsie sits with her curlers in
Putting out her cigarette in the greasy tea which slops
Around the soggy biscuit in the cheap and chipped saucer

'Billy'
She shouts.
(she's reading the paper
digging her ear
adjusting her straps
slicking the ash
[whose powdered waste drifts and glides down
into the dog's water bowl])
'You're not sitting down here like that
Go and wash your hands.'

Albert comes,
Pushing Billy as he makes his weary exodus
and playing a rasping tune on his chin-stubble
he scrapes the sweat from under his arm
so it mingles with the dirt in his fingernails.
Sitting down he complains
'That boy is like a dust-bin
I don't know who he gets it from.'

As Billy washes the soap to wash himself
He remembers that today is his big day. Today Billy is
going to the Youth Employment Office where he will be
offered all kinds of good jobs and worthwhile employment
for a growing lad of fifteen at secondary modern school.
You know the sort, electrician's mate, butcher boy,
plumber's assistant. All good stuff. It's not so much
the lack of interesting jobs that's bad as the gnawing
feeling of why he's in the position he's in. It's not
his fault is it?

Meanwhile ...

Way down yonder, in Woodford Green
Daddy mixes drinks for the social machine
Which turns so properly, just how its done
'Gin, Cynthia, darling, oh do have some'.

'Where's Anthony,' says Mummy, 'Where IS that boy?'
'I did so want him to meet Julie and Roy'
'Oh here's the car now, quiet everyone,
This is Anthony - our son.'

Oh hasn't he grown said the crowd with a roar
As they showered him with hand shakes and smiles and more,
'Just like his father', one's heard to say,
'No, more like his mother,' 'No, surely not', 'Nay'.

Anthony 'work makes me puffy' Rand
(He's shaken Reginald Maudling's hand)
He's been to Eton, he's been to France
Tonight he's been to another deb's dance.

He's got no need for Y.E.O.'s
He can live how he wants till the money goes,
And that isn't likely so he's all right
What about Billy?*

I don't need to say much about this except that it has layers of possibility for teaching literary styles and effects. Despite his incorporation of other media (the first section must be based upon the novellette/play 'Billy Liar' and the poem is a skilled turning of the bastard-jazz number, 'Way Down Yonder in New Orleans') it is the author who is both subject and style. It is a fine example of what the posh sociologists call praxis (i.e. the creation of private meanings within an awareness of the social world, in an attempt to change that world, or what Richard Hoggart has called, "becoming wise in one's own way").

These narratives, when taken together, offer starting points for the study of many literary issues. For adolescents they would have a compelling force, and they are not isolated examples. The teaching of such documents resides in the facts that they are about lives being lived; are contemporary, and they can be literature. I say that they can be because, to date, they are not recognized as such. But we can make them literature simply by saying so. Literature is what we decide it is. These types of narrative are the living bridges to other literature - more conventional and adult literature. They represent important cultural directions for us because they offer a positive response to the democratic challenge - that of establishing a culture that is not only commonly shared but that is commonly made, as well.

Educational institutions must open up private worlds, through the encouragement of Personal Narratives, in order to ensure that the community makes culture. Without the Private Voice, Education and Culture lose in humanity. There are corporate groups, media empires and, shamefully, educational bureaucracies who will be quite content for such a voice to be stilled.

---

* Printed in, The Politics of Literacy, ed. Martin Hoyles, p. 182. Writers and Readers Publishing Corporation, London, 1977.

LITERATURE TEACHING AND SOME OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Geoffrey Summerfield (ENGLAND)

In relation to literature and our pupils, our role as teachers is inevitably pre-emptive: whatever the situation - formal or informal, intensive or extensive - we bring with us to the classroom some more or less definite notion of the repertoire of books that we want our pupils to engage with. Under exam constraints, we are (at worst) reduced to a list of 'set books'; with twelve year olds, still years away from a public examination - we mostly know which books 'we would like them to enjoy', to become involved in.

So, immediately, we meet a nice contradiction. In life, our experience of art, including texts, is more or less autonomous: if a work of art intrigues, excites, baffles, or provokes us (and Robinson Crusoe did all this, and more, to me when I was nine), if it does these things, we find our own questions, our own irresolutions, our own reflections. And we do not will these into consciousness: rather, they are a feature both of the experience, as it happens, and of the after-taste, the after-life of the book as it remains with us, in us.

How, then, do we deal with such matters in our own personal lives? In one sense, a satisfactory text itself answers the 'questions' that it poses. Indeed, one way of construing the dynamic life of any work of art is to see it as first generating tensions and then resolving them. Without the tensions, nothing would be felt to have happened; and without the resolutions, the experience would be felt to be intolerably suspended in mid-air, as flying off at tangents, as disintegrating. Partly for this reason, I suppose, one of the most satisfying narrative archetypes is that of the journey away from home and of the ultimate return: 'in my end is my beginning'.

But there is also a sense in which a good work of art never comes to rest, never subsides into absolutely silent stasis; because we are in some degree 'changed' by the experience, a chain of more or less random speculations, relatings, connections, reflections and reflexive enquiries follow on from it, in their own good time. Coming out of a considerable work of art is rather like waking up after a very deep sleep: we feel as if we have been a long way away, out of our daily, ordinary here and now, our normal selves, into a 'virtual' or 'vicarious' world, where our intensities of perception, our sheer sense of order, our clarity of knowing, have been quite clearly paranormal.

Now it is clear that access to an intensity of paranormal perception, a depth, a range, is one that an important, but largely uncharted, tradition in Western literature and literary thought has valued highly, as a supreme good, even sometimes as the summum bonum: but it is also true, alas, that no one has yet done the necessary work needed to chart this tradition and to make it generally available, as a moral and philosophical support for our work. Such a charting would have to take account of Traherne and his 'path of blessedness', and of the neo-Platonists of the 17th century generally; similarly, it would have to include Mark Akenside's neglected poem, The Pleasures of Imagination in the early 18th century:

> "Hence, finally, by night
> The Village matron, round the blazing hearth,
> Suspends the infant audience with her tales,
> Breathing astonishment! of witching rhymes,
> And evil spirits; of the death-bed call
> Of him who robb'd the widow, and devour'd
> The orphan's portion; of unquiet souls
> Risen from the grave to ease the heavy guilt
> Of deeds in life conceal'd; of shapes that walk
> At dead of night, and clank their chains, and wave
> The torch of hell around the murderer's bed.
> At every solemn pause the crowd recoil,
> Gazing each other speechless, and congeal'd
> With shivering sighs: till eager for the event,
> Around the beldame all erect they hang,
> Each trembling heart with grateful terrors quell'd.

It would then have to find commodius room for the seminal and continuously vivifying insights of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and De Quincey; and recognise the distinctive contributions of Dickens, Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin, William James, Wittgenstein, Chukovsky, James Agee and W. H. Auden, not to mention contemporary figures such as Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney.

Essentially, I suggest, such an account will amount to perfectly sufficient 'reports on experience', an adequate representation of the dynamic interplay of the energies of our inner life, of the way we come to embody meanings and, indeed, create meanings. As the tradition that I've hinted at demonstrates, language can be adequate to this task, and if we have the tact and delicacy we can indeed observe the burgeonings of a rich inner life in children of remarkably tender year. But what is not adequate to this task, and never can be, is the reductive, mechanical, and philistine language of the behaviourist tradition: I mention this only because, in a time reminiscent of the darker years of the 19th century's cult of 'payment by results', a time of anxiety, uncertainty, and of the manipulative exploitation of such moods, the crasser forms of behaviourist notions of what constitutes reading are once more rearing their ugly heads. (See, for example, Christine Nicholls' 'Kentucky Fried Reading Scheme' - an analysis of the SRA's Distar, or Direct Instruction, 'materials' - in Radical Education Dossier 13, Spring 1980, P.O. Box 197, Glebe, New South Wales, 2037). Looking at the Distar texts, I am reminded of James Agee's observation: 'Adults writing to or teaching children: in nearly every word within these textbooks, for instance, there is a flagrant mistake of some kind. The commonest is this: that they simplify their own ear, without nearly enough scepticism as to the accuracy of the simplification, and with virtually no intuition for the child or children; then write or teach to satisfy that ear; discredit the child who is not satisfied, and value the child who, by docile or innocent distortions of his intelligence, is.' (Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.)

Nearly two hundred years ago, Wordsworth - provoked by Tom Wedgwood's proto-behaviourist conception of the child's mind - gave an account of what reading can be for a child: he used not words like 'stimulus' and 'response', the language of the rat-lab., but terms such as 'passion' and possession'; and our sense of our best experiences - and of our pupils' - of reading is emphatically reinforced and endorsed by his testimony vis-a-vis the Thousand and One Nights:

> 'I there have read, devouring as I read,
> Defrauding the day's glory - desperate ...
>
> Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
> And they must have their food.'

Similarly, we can recognise the urgent fervour, delight, and 'grateful terror' of Dickens' early encounters with stories that almost simultaneously made him laugh and made his hair stand on end, and in the process provided him, at a time of severe emotional deprivation (and potential deprivation) with an essential 'other time, another place'.

Yet we must admit that such great experiences are most likely to occur in conditions of privacy, of unbroken intense concentration, free from the distractions that even the mere presence of other people brings to bear. Most school-experience is communal and mostly non-autonomous. It is unlikely therefore that we can regularly guarantee to provide pupils with decently silent interference-free chances for 'devouring', for 'desperation'! Indeed, my first crisis as a young teacher occurred when I tried to protect a class from the insistent (and trivial) incursions of messages from the school-secretary.

Yet there is something to be done. A lead is offered by the exemplary old woman in Akenside's poem, and also by Kornei Chukovsky in Two to Five: it is, quite simply, story-telling and story-reading: both of them are arts/skills woefully neglected in teacher-training. For all of our pupils up to the age of fourteen, there is almost an embarrassing wealth of good literature for young people, and I simply want to stress that we all have a duty to know these books, even if our English tutors in our undergraduate years had never heard of them. Let me add three riders: first, that most good writers for young people are sensitive to the rhetorical features of story-telling: rhythm, pacing, relative density, disposition of episode etc. Most seem to have followed the wisdom of Horatia Ewing - that good prose for a young audience stays close to the distinctive characteristics of story-telling.

My second point is more tendentious: it is that good literature for young people is generally much closer to the tale than it is to, say, the novels of George Eliot or of Henry James: given a reasonably competent delivery, the ear can take it, and the mind is not overwhelmed by relatively complex philosophical, moral, or psychological diversions. Conversely, Middlemarch or The Golden Bowl are books that we need to read individually, in control of our own reading, at our own pace, with free choice in such matters as turning back a page, reading a thorny sentence four or five times, reflecting, and so on. Good literature for young readers (or listeners), on the other hand, tends intuitively to embed its evaluative and reflective features within the mainstream of a narrative that is continuously apprehended as narrative, seamless and unbroken.

My third point is even more tendentious. I think it's high time that we provided ourselves with a new spectrum; hitherto, we have made do with this:

1.

Where 1(a) is literature for children, and 1(b) is (adult) literature. A more useful map - consider, for example, Patricia Wrighton's recent work - is surely:

2.

Where 2(a) is literature, including (*un*differentiatedly), books for young people; and 2(b) is *esoteric*, literature, e.g. Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, and similar texts, where the unaided, untutored, reader is *extremely* unlikely to venture, let alone fare forward very far. 2(b), then, in my model, is literature that tends to stay in print only because it is taught in literature courses in universities and colleges. Historically, many English teachers have been less than adequate to the needs of their pupils, precisely because they enter the schools excessively well equipped - one might even say, burdened - with 2(b), but with precious little of 2(a). (And, one might add, with little genuine enthusiasm, as *private* readers, for much of 2(b)).

Where, then, do these preliminary observations leave us? I have suggested that reading literature is, in a useful sense, a 'paranormal' experience, an experience of being 'possessed', akin to what Eliot pointed to in *The Family Reunion*:

> 'people to whom nothing has ever happened
> Cannot understand the unimportance of events.'

Literature, internalized, is a 'happening' rather than an 'event'. I suggest that schools, as institutions, often filled by more or less unrelieved distraction are not often conducive to such experiences - a good teacher is one who protects her pupils from the distraction of the school-machinery, and who capitalizes on the unavoidable fact of enforced togetherness by becoming, among other things, a story-reader and a story-teller.

But how, at present, do we conceive of our role? What is the precise nature of our intervention between pupil and text? I suppose that, having majored in English literature, we perceive ourselves primarily as literary critics, who can wring a text dry until it cries 'Hold! No more!' (I put it unfairly). And I suppose, further, that the work that gives us the greatest sense of professional, even intellectual, legitimation is the close textual work we do with those older pupils who are aiming to read humanities at university.

I believe that close attention to the words on the page is a very fine thing: certainly, it's one of the half dozen things that continue to give me the keenest satisfaction in my life. But if there is no internalized, reflective, 'happening' to attend to, no permitted state of arousal, of being 'moved', then what we ask our pupils to engage in is merely a kind of linguistic analysis (which is not the same thing as experiencing art), based on a folkloristic amateurish kind of linguistics, of a decontextualized text, floating like a fantastic balloon (Henry James's image) in the air.

How then do we proceed? My view is that our pupils should first encounter the text, as auspiciously as possible, and *nothing else*. (This usually amounts to someome reading the text (especially if it's a poem) aloud, as well as they can). Then the experience should be repeated, again without comment, without explanation, without interpretation. Then, I think, after the text alone has done its own distinctive work, we can launch our pupils into concentrated collaborative activity. Let me give an example: here is a poem that I'd choose to read with young readers (i.e. anyone under, say, 30). I like the craft of it, the way Kipling folds meanings into his poem rather as one folds suet into a pudding. The craft is modest, neat, efficient, and adequate.

'CITIES AND THRONES AND POWERS'

Cities and Thrones and Powers
  Stand in Time's eye,
Almost as long as flowers,
  Which daily die:
But, as new buds put forth
  To glad new man,
Out of the spent and unconsidered Earth
  The Cities rise again.

This season's Daffodil,
  She never hears
What change, what chance, what chill,
  Cut down last year's;
But with bold countenance,
  And knowledge small,
Esteems her seven days' continuance
  To be perpetual.

So Time that is o'er-kind
  To all that be,
Ordains us e'en as blind,
  As bold as she:
That in our very death,
  And burial sure,
Shadow to shadow, well persuaded, saith,
  'See how our works endure!'

I was once supervising a student-teacher who told me that he'd had a difficult time trying to 'teach' the poem to a group of not specially talented 17 year olds. Throwing down a not altogether unexpected gauntlet, he asked me to go in and try to do better. In his case, there had been text, pupils - a class of 20, not broken down into groups - and the student-teacher, perceived by the pupils as teacher. It seems that they waited for him to tell them what the poem 'meant'.

I decided to break the class down into seven very small groups, and to provide them with written questions. I first read the poem aloud, then had a period of silence. They then moved into their groups and proceeded to discuss the questions, which I'd tried to make disarmingly simple.

QUESTIONS

N.B. Try to reach a group answer to each question. If this is impossible, make a note of your differences.

1. Were you at all surprised, disconcerted, or puzzled by the first three lines of Stanza 1? If so, what exactly surprised, disconcerted, or puzzled you?

2. Some people think line 4 of Stanza 1 is unnecessary or superfluous, and just put in to fill out the pattern. Do you agree?

3. When you read line 3 of Stanza 2 aloud, is it better to stress a continuous line (one unit) or to separate it out into three short distinct phrases?

4. Do you think Kipling is poking fun at the daffodil in Stanza 2?

5. A seesaw balances on a pivot. Is there one word that acts as a pivot in Stanza 2?

6. 'Esteems' could have at least two meanings. Do you think that it's possible for the poem to contain two meanings simultaneously? (Check the word in a good dictionary, e.g. Chambers' 20th Century.)

7. When words rhyme in a poem, they sometimes do so because they contain meanings that agree, or are in harmony with each other. Can you find an example of this happening in this poem? And can you find an example of the opposite - where the rhyme is 'uniting' words whose meanings are in conflict?

8. In line 6 of Stanza 3, do you think that 'burial sure' (instead of 'sure burial') was composed just for the rhyme with 'endure'?

9. Are any of your grandparents still alive? What do you think they would like to be remembered for?

10. Are any of your grandparents dead? What do you remember them for?

11. Is time 'precious' for you? When? In what circumstances?

12. Do people ever tell you 'not to waste time'? How do you react?

13. Does time sometimes 'fly'? Sometimes drag? What is it doing now?

14. Has time moved continuously at the same rate during the last half hour?

15. Do you think it's morbid to think about death?

16. Does this poem make you 'think new thoughts' or simply express in another way thoughts you've already had?

17. What have questions 9 and 10 to do with the poem?

18. Devise a question that will draw other peoples' attention to something that you have noticed in the poem but which has not been attended to in the questions.

What, then, are these questions variously doing? What's the value of what they're doing? (cf. the pupils' observations: 'I don't see the point of this' - an interesting metaphor, for a point is very small, localized, neat, limited, focussed). What I hoped to make my questions do was:

- To provide an occasion for problem-solving talk between, among, the pupils, collaboratively.

- To allow for a variety of reactions to the poem: to point the students; reflectively, to their own 'forms of life' - anger, uncertainty, confusion, scepticism, etc. - that the poem, the group-work and the questions aroused in them: didn't push them into, but, rather, prised or nudged out of them, brought them to consciousness, so that they could reflect on, consider, some small features of their own inner lives (which is ideally where the poem becomes incorporated).

- Some questions (e.g., 2) allow pupils to express negative feelings about the poem; more important, by anticipating the possibility of abstractions, they serve to legitimize such responses. This is an important alternative to the kind of piety that invests so much literature-teaching. It also allows for the recognition of the co-existence of simultaneously opposing responses, of conflicting responses, unresolved.

- To offer clues about the nature of interpretation, e.g. question 3. As I.A. Richards said, forty years ago, it's often the 'simple' questions that are the most important, but, being simple, they're not asked.

- Point to various resonances within a single word; e.g. question 5.

- Invite pupils to reflect on their own experience, both directly and obliquely, so as to bring them into some implicit relationship with the poem. This may help them to understand 'where the poem came from', and 'why it came'. These are at once simple and complex phenomenological questions that strike me as crucial: many Honours English undergraduates have little or no idea of what literature is or of how or why it's ever made at all. The fact of its existence is something that they have never been invited to reflect on.

- Some questions are also offered especially for those pupils for whom little or nothing of any import or significance has happened in their experience of the poem. We can never ensure that any literature will 'work', will 'take': it seems to me important to help pupils to be honest in this respect. There's nothing more trying than to have pupils pretending to have had experience that they have not in truth had at all.

- The tone and range of the questions represent my attempt to ensure that talking about a text can come to be felt to be as 'natural' as talking about people; so that particular acts of literary talk, accounts of reading, can become unforcedly autobiographical (which is what all good criticism, in an important sense, is!), so that we can say, as Randall Jarrell says, 'This is how it is/was with me.'

- The critical, indeed the criterial, feature of effective small-group work is that it allows for that which is a feature of good personal relationships - namely, a near-symmetrical reciprocity and sharing between the members of the group. In such a context, fear of losing face or talking foolishness is unlikely, and pupils are more inclined to get their inner and outer voices, their private and public forms of discourse into a more integral, healthier relationship; in a word, be prepared to 'think on their feet', which is what many undergraduates, alas, never relearn. Girls especially, have to 'unlearn to not speak', and all pupils have to learn to trust in the potential usefulness of relatively unrehearsed utterance.

What is the essential value of such experience? Surely, that it bridges the gap (often a gulf, an abyss) between formal and informal modes, helps pupils to integrate, and reduces the temptation to talk for effect. It offers a transition that too many pupils find problematical: somewhere along the way, too many of them lose their own 'voice' - from disuse, or dis-ease - and veer into a parody of their mentors.

What, then, is the unique contribution of the teacher? How is this best characterized, as an art, as a competence, as a task? If the teacher has some sense of a provisionally sufficient or adequate reading of the text, - 'provisionally sufficient' since the pupils are, in a real sense, immature readers, and will still be so when the task is 'completed' - if the teacher has some such ideal, then it will be both through her questions and, more important, through the pupils' questions that the class will move from surfaces to depths. And the teacher's contribution will be to so enable and to apply such pressure, that the questions that the pupils ask of themselves, and of their experience of the text, will attend both to local fine detail and also to the larger patterns, the implicit sub-textual levels, so that the total experience achieves a satisfactory state of integration, of connectedness. But the teacher will be concerned not to press for those larger patterns, those sub-texts, until the text has been vividly experienced in all the varieties of its local, particular, vividness. In other words, the artful teacher will be nimble, light-footed and alert, so as to sense when it is appropriate to hold back, to leave an issue unresolved, and when to press for clarity, for resolution, for definition.

And - this I wish to stress - there will be no one in the classroom, other than the teacher, who can perform this task. If the text is a play, then the teacher's role is closest to that of a director in the theatre, and, ideally, all work on the text will be directed to a hypothetical, or actual, performance of the text, to bring it to dramatic realization; and the role of director at best is, not to use actors as mere tools or instruments for the mouthing of his own directorial meanings, but rather, through side-coaching, negotiation, conversation, reflection, trial and error, to collaborate, in shared mutuality, in order to arrive at a realization that makes coherent and inclusive sense for all concerned, even though each person involved may well hold on to marginal reservations, alternative nuances. Crucially, criterially, if each pupil does not, in some recognizable sense, make the text 'her own', then the enterprise will have been less than successful.

I recently saw a brilliant production of Britten's opera, Paul Bunyan (libretto by W.H. Auden), put on by two schools in York, England. It was the first production of the opera, using the forces for which the opera was written forty years ago, and was almost overwhelmingly successful. All the pupils - boys and girls, aged eleven to eighteen - sang and acted as if they were in paradise. Imagine, if you will, the talk that went on in rehearsals, the thinking that went into that talk. Then consider this: in life, much of our most energetic and reflective talk is synpractic: i.e., it accompanies, guides, evaluates, checks, corrects, modifies action, (praxis). Now, many pupils are baffled by what they regard as the classroom-habit, or vice, of talking for talking's sake, of talk, talk, talk, divorced from action: the very converse of synpractic talk, which is a way of verbalizing, concurrently, the choices and decisions that are involved in any complex or challenging action.

Of all the non-synpractic questions to ask pupils about a text, the most useless if probably 'Why do you like/dislike this?' (The best answer being, 'Because I do!' - a refusal to submit to reductiveness.) The question is closely related to a kind of behaviourism, escaped from the laboratories into the classrooms: 'Ah, yes, you salivated at the word 'Dapple'. Now let's just put these electrodes on your head, and see if we can find out why such a word produces that response.'

Can we, then, abandon the crude and philistine psychology of stimulus-response and all the passivity and dumb-animal submissiveness implied in that model? And substitute for it a more generous conception of the human intelligence, of mind as involved in making choices? Certainly, if we can establish a more active, engagé, productive, process-embedded, goal-aspiring model of reading a text, then we shall necessarily involve our pupils in the act of choosing. And the choosing will be felt, will be experienced, as having some point, some purpose, some personally incorporated intention.

Similarly, we need to respect, and make more explicit, the sheer subjectivity of reading, the fact that at any humanly adequate level, at the level of any decent richness of consciousness, (as opposed to the cardboard unrealities of 'reading' as promulgated by the S.R.A.) the experience is as much affective as it is cognitive, and indeed is a priori affective, is a movement, a pulse, of feeling, in all forms of reading outside the most reducedly utilitarian moments of information-gathering. (And even there, there are significant affective elements!)

What more adequate account, then, can we offer? Let me come close to repeating myself. There is, in the event, no shortage of more appropriate descriptions, ('narratives' is perhaps a better term), of the interplay of text and reader. The role-call is a rich and exciting one: the William James of 'On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings'; the Henry James of the Prefaces, as reader of his own texts; the D.H. Lawrence of Fantasia of the Unconscious; the Wordsworth of The Prelude; the De Quincey of Suspiria de Profundis; the Hazlett of On Poetry in General; Ted Hughes' Myth and Education and Poetry in the Making; Auden's Making, Knowing and Judging; Wittgenstein's later Notebooks; Stanley Fish's Self-Destroying Artefacts; and Randall Jarrell's essays on poetry. And much more besides!

But how can we, as teachers build on both the distinctive pleasures of our own experiences of literature and the insights into the dynamic interior life of the reader that the writers mentioned above can offer us? Perhaps the first thing we need to do is to abandon the counter-productive habit of giving our pupils our own finished and coherent accounts of our experience of text after the event. Much of the literature that we 'teach' is comfortably familiar to us, manageable, grasped, fixed, settled, non-problematic, and well documented with critical commentary; so, we are in danger of offering a kind of coroner's inquest, even a post mortem; of failing to make ourselves available to our pupils as active readers involved in the tentative process of making meaning, making sense, of a hitherto unknown text.

So we need to be prepared to offer ourselves as new readers, encountering and reaping a page for the first time; to think aloud, teasing out both the intrinsic and the extrinsic uncertainties. (I've just discovered the poetry of Les Murray: I find it very compelling, irresistibly interesting: stylistically and formally, many of his poems are tours de force; some of my uncertainties are to do with extrinsic elements (i.e. I don't recognize many of the Australian references); but my richer uncertainties are to do with intrinsic elements: how to read this phrase; how to decide what the tone is here; how to find the relationships, the cohering patterns, between the parts). So, to think aloud, line by line, disposing of the extrinsic elements, so as to leave the mind free to play with the formidable and teasing intrinsic elements; to give an account of our momentary, shifting, satisfactions, expectations, and above all our uncertainties, our sense of something as yet unresolved, of a journey not yet completed.

Our pupils, constituting a more or less passive audience, too often sit while the teacher, as master-reader, as master-critic, shows how much he knows; displays the sharper edges of his critical teeth; explains the 'meaning'; sets up, wittingly or otherwise, the notion that literature (and especially poetry) never lays its cards on the table, is always hiding its 'real' meaning, which the master-reader must disinter so as to hold up the bones for the pupils' inspection.

Yet an unavoidable contradiction lurks here: if literature is to be valued, treasured, then surely it can be trusted to do its own work? John Dewey once said, of an item in a curriculum, that if it had to be 'made interesting', then it should not have been there in the first place. Similarly, if a literary text has to be explained, surely the very need for that explanation points to some kind of mismatch or disjunction between pupils and text? I happen to love Wordsworth just this side of idolatry, yet one of my most lamentable memories is of my encounter, at the age of seventeen, with an edition of his selected poems in which every margin came to be crammed with annotations, explanations, paraphrases and interpretations pressed on me by a teacher who either couldn't or wouldn't leave the poems to do their own intrinsic work. It was almost twenty years before I could return with equanimity and positive expectation to Wordsworth: I am reminded of Auden's observation, that no one should be allowed to listen to Verdi before they are thirty.

If, then, wiser ways are to be found through a shift in our conduct as 'teaching readers', do we also need a new view of what constitutes a satisfactory literature curriculum? I've already touched on this; as you will by now have detected, this is a spiral lecture; but I'd like to eleborate just a little. What I wish for is an inclusive curriculum, predicated on a very simple principle: that each pupil be allowed and encouraged - and occasionally nudged or provoked - to range as widely, as variously, over the written word, as is humanly feasible. That for every text that may be studied intensively by all the pupils in a class, there be a dozen at least in which an individual be encouraged to browse extensively - so that no pupil becomes trapped - to borrow a trope from Wordsworth - within the pinfold of our conceit, our blinkers, our predilections. The right of the enterprising 17 year old to range promiscuously through Tolstoy, Camus, Patrick White, Thomas Keneally, Graham Greene, Saul Bellow, Donald Barthelme, James Dickey, and a hundred others - this is as important a goal for us, as is the right of an omnivorous 10 year old to read everything that Laura Ingalls Wilder ever wrote. And in this matter, we need to recognise the variousness, the idiosyncrasies, the distinctive passions of each pupil: as Black once said, 'One law for the ox and the lion is oppression'. Look at your pupils: there sits 'the ox'! What does he need? What books will both call out his living sensitivities and also lead him on into new, subtler, more evolved 'forms of life'? Look at 'the lioness': what does she need? What is she ready for? What is she growing into, reaching out for? And what of 'the wombat', 'the koala', 'the goanna' and the rest of your menagerie?

But what, I hear you interpolate, what of the One? The class as a class? What of those constraints which militate against the possibility of attending to the needs of the indivudal? Are there, or are there not, texts which are suited to the simultaneous attention of 35 pupils? Texts that will 'include' everyone, even in a mixed-ability situation? Well, like me, you will surely remember the problematic primal scene, as it were: thirty pupils ostensibly reading round the class: ten have already read the book; ten are attuned to the teacher's intentions; and ten are 'somewhere else'. For everyone, moreover the unprepared and stumbling reading-aloud offers what is for the most part a travesty, a mauling, of the text.

What better ways have we actually found of 'sharing' a text? How can we henceforth ensure that our interventions amount to something more enlivening than a blanketing imposition? Such questions invite me to invoke an inalienable principle - that of the active learner. Consider the analogy of the historian: when a historian is being an historian, he is active in a great variety of ways, and it is only when his pupils or students study the history that he has provided, that the processes become less active, more passive, less primary, more a matter of an unreflecting amassing of facts, more a matter of dummy runs.

In English, similarly, we, as readers, engage in exhilarating, attentive, speculative work at the rock-face of a book that we read for the first time. We engage in an act that we experience, in Margaret Donaldson' phrase, 'as freely chosen.' We construct a virtual or vicarious world from which we eventually emerge with the sense that we have been 'somewhere else', have even become another person. This process of imagining is obviously a deeply congenial and necessary experience. But, conversely, as we drive our pupils through the texts that we have chosen, what do we all too often find? That their experience of such ways of reading such texts has left them with a strong disinclination to continue reading such texts. Why is this so? Is it the choice of text? Choice of process?

Boring old book-reviews to be written? Too many footnotes to beaver through? Too many obscure techniques to be explained? Too much searching for 'hidden' meanings? Too many rusty locks to be picked with someone else's old keys? Too many second-hand opinions to be patched together and parted?

Consider the autonomous reader; she chooses her own pace for the assimilation of the text: one will read War and Peace over a long week-end, while another will read it episodically over a period of several months. She will recapitulate, turn back, refresh her memories of earlier episodes, wonder, speculate, surmise, anticipate, and even 'cheat' by glancing shamefully at the closing page to see 'how it all ends'. Now, there is surely nothing quite like this first reading, nothing as alerting, fresh, arousing and even breathless. And this experience of the first unjaded lively encounter with an as yet unknown text is one that our pupils deserve to have as often as possible.

In the interests of thoroughness and of keeping up standards, however, we too often impose on them the umpteenth reading of a known text gone stale, in our anxious pursuit of a total reading, whereby no stone, no pebble, no grain of dust, is left unturned. But we, as readers, know that we need to read to satisfaction, to repletion, in our own good time: the point was well made by Coleridge at various places in his notebooks: it's essentially a matter of decorum (Aristotle's term for appropriateness). But too often we will not allow time (space) for assimilation: we attack the text and the pupils with our questions. (Question: are they even our questions Or are they the kinds of 'clever' questions that we learned to ask at the feet of our 'clever' mentors in the universities: and let us, parenthetically, face the fact that intelligent and sensitive ways with literature are rarely to be learned in our university English Departments). Are the questions that constitute our ways of 'doing our work' the questions that we really wish to ask? Should we not, rather, allow the text to come to its own life in the minds of our pupils, and encourage our pupils to ask their own questions?

Imperceptibly or emphatically, the text is too often wrested from the pupil-reader and appropriated to 'higher' pedagogical ends: used, then, as an occasion for 'study' rather than reading. Such 'study' can be an exhilarating activity for some pupils, but for most, the gap between intention and effect is exceedingly wide: even in English Honours courses, many undergraduates drift into daydream or doodling, while the tutor pursues his obsessions, talking to the ceiling. So let us remember this: that when criticisms of the 'deplorable' state of high school English teaching are voiced by university English teachers, and we pay respectful (i.e. submissive) attention, and promise to pull our socks up, then, in Agee's words, 'many are pleased who formerly were shocked, and think no more of it'.

The claims of study, of close reading, of strenuous reading, of teasing out nuances, of really listening - these are honourable claims, and must be recognized. But equally we have to recognize that the law of diminishing returns lurks like a malign ghost at the door of every classroom, waiting for the moment when our pupils merely receive our version of the text, and lost sight of that experience of the text that feels less like 'oh, his master's voice again', and more like exploration, gossip, picnic, conversation, or whatever other trope we may choose for representing the meaningful work of fictive and poetic imagining.

B. Comments - Some Practice

THE TWO CULTURES – LITERATURE AND MEDIA – SOME STRATEGIES FOR THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Christine Higgins (AUSTRALIA)

> I take it we all believe it necessary to engage the social and educational discontinuities in the western world in order to help our students develop some control over their own lives and over the post-industrial media culture.
>
> [Peter Moss]

In any discussion of literature (or any of the other art forms) or the mass media, it is important to remember that what we are dealing with are fundamental methods of communication, which, along with the other more formal systems of communication, (such as religious institutions) use language, images or sounds or a combination of these to convey a message to members of a group. It is equally important to bear in mind the fact that these modes of communication are cultural artifacts subject to change, refinement or redefinition in line with cultural change.

As Raymond Williams rightly points out in an early paper, we are brought up with some misleading notions about communication:

> We think of it as an activity which takes place after the important things have happened. Communication is, so to say, the news after the event, the passing on of things after something important has occurred. Communication is secondary, just as people think of art as secondary, as a marginal activity, because first there is real life and then there is art. First there is reality and then there is communication about reality. (1961: 5)

Rather, the opposite is true. Communication is not "communication about reality", it is an integral part of that nebulous concept "reality" itself. Communication instances our particular culture's way of seeing and "speaking about" our particular version of reality. After all, reality, however we may interpret it, is, as Levi Strauss and other major theorists have demonstrated, a cultural construct. It is through language basically, and also through the other non-verbal means of communication that we come to know the reality of ourselves and our society.

Because our ways of seeing or communicating our reality to one another are culturally induced, people easily accept as given and immutable the community's structures, values and attitudes and overall sense of itself. But it is, of course, possible to see this world very differently from the accepted mode; it is possible to reassess, reinterpret aor reject out of hand the commonly accepted social forms and mores. Clearly, the work of our great artists, philosophers and reformers is memorable because it has offered experience readings of reality.

As English teachers, I think most of us would see literature as one particular art form that does this. I think we would agree that the serious writer sets out to explore, reflect upon and seek new meaning in human experience. Such writers seek to articlate something of the complexity and diversity of experience, the feel and texture of life in a unique combination of language and form. Second-rate works certainly may do no more than represent and confirm conventional ways of looking at the world, but great literature provides new or alternate ways of seeing and making sense of experience. Such literature can be disturbing, it can force us to reassess our pre-existing assumptions about reality, to see their limitations and perhaps even to reject them. Overall, then, such a mode of communication is capable of extending our knowledge of ourselves and our imaginative grasp of the depth and breadth of experience - in short, it extends our humanity.

If this humanising capacity of literature is set against that of the mass media - the twentieth century technology culture - it is evident that here the emphasis is on superficiality rather than on depth, on ephemeral shows and trappings rather than on the underlying reality they conceal, on the maintenance of social forms rather than on the assessing of their worth. Clearly they do not deepen but rather, to use Tod Gitlin's phrase, they "flatten consciousness".

The media distort reality in a number of important ways. Firstly, they attempt (generally successfully) to convert authentic human experience into a show, "a spectacle", an entertainment mode, and this for commercial ends. The following example illustrates this well.

It comes from a radio talk-back programme and is part of an interview with John Everingham who swam the Mekong River to bring his fiancee to safety in Thailand.

Host: Good morning, John.

Ever: Good morning from Bangkok, Jerry.

Host: Um, it really is quite a story, isn't it?

Ever: Ah, yes, I guess so, there's plenty of it and I guess that's not even the whole story, though.

Host: It proably came quite easily to you to write it being a journalist and ah, having lived through the experience, the sort of stuff of which romantic novels are written.

Ever: Well, to be quite honest, that's not at all the case. When they first started asking me to write it I sat down and wrote half a dozen pages and threw it all away. I'd never written about myself.

Ever: The only things I usually write about are politics and the things I like writing about are politics of South East Asia. When it came to sort of writing something about myself, um, I actually threw it in and said, look I just don't want to do it, and so they sent a man up here, one of their editors from Australia, and he sat down and interviewed me and he wrote it.

Host: Were you surprised at the incident, that that swim across the river and back again made the headlines around the world?

Ever: Well, I wasn't really surprised that it made some, I guess, that it made it around the world, yes; I mean, I thought maybe Australians might be interested or certainly in Thailand I thought somebody might be interested, and usually the story ... and the people have gone the next day, I didn't see any reason to think that this would be any different, in fact, I think it went a little overboard, a little bit stupid in fact ...

Host: Tell me, tell me about the, er, you must be a romantic, kind of impetuous kind of character to have risked your life as you did, in such a way as you did?

Ever: Well, I am probably what you would call a romantic in general, I mean I've been sort of wandering around looking for the nicest and best of everything for a long time, I guess since I was 16. I've been overseas by myself wandering around just looking for, literally, the best of everything and I believe I also have one of the great women in the world.

Host: Tell me, tell me, when you say one of the great women of the world, obviously you're very much in love, tell me how you met.

Ever: Ah, well, it was just a very ordinary kind of meeting at a party when I felt nothing particularly for this particular girl, except that she was very attractive, that was my only impression, so there was no dramatics at all, our relationship, I guess, was built very slowly, in fact, over a number of years and was built nicely on sort of philosophy rather than any wild passion and the relationship, although building very slowly, is one that I think is very, very powerful.

Clearly a tension develops between the programme host who constantly tries hard to sensationalise the rescue, to transmute the event into drama to entertain the listeners, and John Everingham himself who consciously refuses to interpret his experiences in this way. This is clear in the host's evaluations - "the sort of stuff of which romantic novels are written", the suggestive elicitation - "you must be a romantic kind of impetuous kind of character ...?", but he is thwarted each time as Everingham blocks him at every turn with a denial or a reasonably detached evaluation of his experience, and then goes on to tell the story, quite laconically, in his own way. The effort made by the host in this instance is simply one example of an unsuccessful attempt to distort reality. The mass media prefer to deny the value of an individual's personal experience as it stands; as a worthwhile message in its own right. Media conventions apparently dictate that events must be dramatised and often fictionalised before they are interesting to listeners or readers.

However, in many other cases, the subject of radio, T.V. or magazine interviews is more compliant and the interviewer is able to shape the inverview along the lines he desires to disseminate a particular (often pre-determined message). This leads me to the second way the media shape or distort reality - by myth-making. A great many media programmes do no more than reinforce and perpetuate certain myths (and I include certain political beliefs here) on a wider cultural level. One further short segment of a radio interview will illustrate this. The interview is conducted by the same programme host as before. His subject is Christine Conway - a singer and composer of popular songs:

> Host: "She lives, rather co-exists among the dreams and fears, the hopeful and the hopeless, alongside the debris and the glitter of Hollywood Boulevard, she's anyone of hundreds of ladies you may see there, do you know who she is? Hollywood Rose."
>
> Christine, that's beautiful. Did you write that?
>
> Chris: Yes I did.
>
> Host: I have here, I never knew Lee Conway had such a beautiful wife, Christine Conway, who's a lovely talented singer. I love the record; they sent me a copy of the record and it really is beautiful.
>
> Chris: That's good. Thank you.
>
> Host: It must be nice to not only see Christine Conway on the label, but Christine Conway underneath the title of the song.
>
> Chris: There is the glory, yes, to write something and especially a song, and have it recorded and have people like it.
>
> Host: And Hollywood Rose is a person? I gather from this that you've written about a story setting out the background of the song you've written.
>
> Chris: That's right.
>
> Host: Tell me the story.
>
> Chris: Well, when Lee and I arrived in Hollywood last year we were full of Hollywood Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard but very early in the piece we had to stop

Chris: at a pedestrian crossing for an old lady, who was probably 80 or 85 year old and she was dressed up in hot pink, hot pink pant suit with a great big picture hat and it was covered in pink roses and her face was painted with blue eye-shadow and false eyelashes and she shuffled across the road and sat down on a bus seat. I looked at her and just commented to Lee, it looks to me that there goes one of the beautiful ladies in the chorus line, maybe in a Carmen Miranda movie, but I wonder if she was Rudi Valentino's leading lady and look at her now, who is she now? During the time that we were there, we saw a lot of these ladies, who were all different, but somehow the same, and I just decided in my own mind that these were the ladies of Hollywood, the stars of yesterday.

Host: Isn't it strange, when you think about it, it's absolutely true that when you find women attracted to Hollywood for the reason of stardom, fame and either they had a little bit of it and could never get over it, or they never had it at all, but being close to it is better than nothing.

Chris: That's exactly how I feel, that they never did become the star they dreamed they would be, but because they were always on the periphery of stardom, they were always in the chorus line or in the front row of a line of extras. They got to touch the stars in some small way and through the years they stayed in the hope that maybe their dream would come true, and now all those years have been and gone and they are still, to me, I feel, that they are still living with and in those dreams of the past.

In this interview the host has no difficulty in flaterring his subject into talking freely about Hollywood, her life as "a star" and her marriage to "a star". His role seems to be no more than that of an admiring listener, a fan, perhaps; but in reality, he is skilfully ritualising fantasies associated with Hollywood and stardom for the listeners. The stars as cultural ideals is a theme somewhat incestuously but insistently developed by the mass media in many contexts.

Thirdly, because of the nature of their technology - and I am thinking here especially of visual media - for the first time in history perhaps, the media are possessed of the means of making fantasy or fictive experience seem completely "real". (I refer here to authenticity on a superficial level). The media have almost perfected this aspect while often ignoring the deeper reality - the essential "truth" of genuine human experience. People are easily fooled into a belief that the T.V. drama or film they are watching - clearly a fictive event - is reality, simply because the illusion of reality it creates seems so complete and thus so convincing. In literature, we remain aware of what is fiction and what is real life. In theatre-based drama, some of the appeal of the play, I suggest, has always been the consciousness of the created tension between the actor and his stage role. But mass mediated drama does not seek to explore or exploit this tension between the real and the imaginary; rather it makes its effect by the manipulation of reality itself or in the creation of its own surface reality in the way I suggested above. The danger is that this constructed pseudo-world may easily become more appealing for people than the truth or reality of their own personal genuine experience of the world.

Another serious manipulation of reality occurs (again because of the media's fixation with entertainment) daily in the creation of news "stories" (a significant term in this context). Here, fact is transmuted into fiction. History becomes synonymous with entertainment. Events are dramatised and sensationalised, as one sees at present, in news reports of the release of the American hostages in Iran.

Films or documentary dramas are produced with incredible speed after sensational events like the 1976 Entebbe raid. In such cases, one wonders what the public remember best, the real event or the fictional (but apparently "real") T.V. version - the real "actors" or their T.V. equivalents? Such overnight myth-making virtually negates the significance of history.

It seems to me then that it is above all this unique dual ability of the media that makes it sinister and culturally unique in the development of communications. I refer here to what I said above - the media's tendency to fictionalise fact (in news reports, current affairs or documentaries) while presenting it as truth, or, on the other hand, their presentation of fantasy in the guise of truth (as in T.V. drama or film.

Not only is reality being blurred or manipulated in these ways, but, in the process, the consciousness of the individual, indeed, even perhaps of a people, is also being manipulated. Numerous (Marxist) critics - Fruchter, Gitlin, Aronowitz, Althusser to name but a few - have spoken of the use of "the show" or "the spectacle" to manipulate or control consciousness in post-industrial capitalist societies. One short quotation from Fruchter makes this point clearly:

> The spectacle is the continuously produced and therefore continuously evolving pseudo-reality ... which each individual encounters, inhabits and accepts as public and official reality, thereby denying as much as is possible, the daily private reality of exploitation, pain, suffering and inauthenticity he or she experiences. (1971: 5)

So does Gitlin:

> Whether deceptively labeled as "entertainment", "news", "culture", "education", or "public affairs", TV programs aim to narrow and flatten consciousness - to tailor every man's world view to the consumer mentality, to placate political discontent, to manage what cannot be placated, to render social pathologies personal, to level class-consciousness. (1972: 345)

It is salutary at this point, then, to remind ourselves that it is this media culture that our students, indeed all of us, meet and consume daily. If we see our role as English teachers as one of enabling students to come to terms with their own experience, to interpret it meaningfully and to place it in its wider cultural context;

and further, if we wish to assist them towards recognition that there are new (or alternate) ways of seeing the world, to provide them with the tools necessary to evaluate critically accepted social norms, then it is imperative for us to confront mass mediated culture in the classroom and to scrutinise it alongside the treatment of literary works.

One way of approaching such a goal might well be through a close examination of "texts" of various kinds. In the past, teachers have tended to regard the novel or play or poetry anthology being studied by the class at the time as the only admissable text or texts. Why not broaden this to include texts as various as newspaper and advertising copy, film, T.V. drama, broadcast current affairs discussions, political cartoons, talk-back radio discourse, magazine articles and popular fiction?

Consider the possibilities of the following in this context:

(a) Advertising copy (broadcast):

> And now another in our series - "Lucky Breaks".
>
> Patrick Murphy, a painter, is working on the Story Bridge. Stepping back to admire his handiwork, Patrick falls, but luckily, he manages to save himself hanging by one arm. A friend of Patrick's, walking below, recognises Pat and waves: "How are you, Pat?" Pat waves back. Wrong arm! (Scream and sounds of falling). But luckily for Patrick, a boat passing underneath breaks his fall.
>
> Keep listening for more "Lucky Breaks", brought toyou by Girlocks, specialists in automatic brakes and clutches.

(b) A news editorial (broadcast):

> You can be sure there'll be some celebrating up on the peanut farm today. Jo "Bananas", as he's affectionately known in some quarters must be delighted with the numbers at yesterday's Brisbane street march. Estimates of the roll up ranged from 300 to 600. One thing is clear, and I'll have to agree with Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, the numbers are dropping off over the street march issue, and that has to mean that support for it is starting to decline. For instance, yesterday, only 89 people were arrested. In the previous march, 346 were locked up. It seems the issue is now left to "Rent-a-Crowd" and the dregs of the Labor Party. This drop in support is through no lack of warning. As usual, radio stations around the country received their press releases about this illegal street-march earlier this week. I think the key to it is Mr. "Bananas" strength. He has stood firm in the face of opposition. He has now learned to avoid over-kill - the police at yesterday's march was relatively small - and he has made the most of the great Australian apathy. He knew if he ignored his opponents long enough, they would give up. You know the old saying "you get what you deserve?" Well, it can also apply to dictators.

(c) A newspaper report:

London. - Flamboyant ex-public schoolboy Peter Bellwood expects to reap a rich reward from the ashes of an awesome natural disaster.

He and his partner Larry Ferguson have written the screenplay for "St. Helens", a $4 million drama documentary film on the American volcano which blew its top, killed at least 72 people, devastated 400 square kilometres and affected the world's weather.

Peter, 42, was drinking vodka-based bullshots in a London Hotel yesterday, puffing pungent French cigarettes which mingled with the smell of his after-shave.

He was ecstatic at the content of the film, which could become the biggest money spinner of 1981.

"My partner and I were called to to see shots of the aftermath of the volcano's eruption," he said.

"It was unbelievable. Even the old projectionist, who has seen it all, came out of his box and said: 'What the hell was that?'.

There was this boiling mixture of water, mud, molten lava and debris moving at 136 km/h.

Below the mountain was Spirit Lake and Toutle River. The lake was literally incinerated, and the river took everything in its path with it. I got the chills watching it. It was other-worldly. Incomprehensible.

We saw still photographs of it blowing, which have now been turned into live action with the aid of a computer."

Using reality as a backcloth Bellwood and his partner wrote a story around two men were were killed when St. Helens went up.

One was 83 year old Harry Truman, who refused to leave his 16 cats and his Spirit Lake home where he was born; the other was 30 year old geologist David Johnston who, according to Bellwood, was liquified in the blast.

"It's a story of a man at the end of his life who was a loner, and the man at the beginning of his life who was a loner, and how they come together."

"If I had gone to Leeds or York universities things might have turned out differently.

As it was I went to Cambridge and became president of the Footlights Dramatic Club at the time that John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Peter Cook and Eleanor Bron were there." (The Sunday Mail, January 25th, 1981).

(d) A teenage magazine segment:

> If it hadn't been for the wine we'd been drinking that night, I'd never have agreed to it. Afterwards, I realised I should have protested - flatly refused - when Kerry said softly, "Janie, you're so beautiful. Please let me take a picture of you." Instead, lulled by that glorious languorous feeling that always swept over me after we'd made love, I rolled on to my back and stretched my arms lazily above my head.
>
> "What would you do with a photograph of me?"
>
> Kerry picked up his camera from the dressing-table - the expensive camera that was one of the luxuries long-distance lorry driving provided.
>
> "I'd pin it up in my cab. It would give me something to dream about on those long, lonely hauls."
>
> I thought of Sam, my husband, at this moment driving through the night somewhere in France and felt a pang of guilt. (From True, December, 1980).

In all of these, the text is "held in language" as Roland Barthes would say; thus, to attempt to reveal "the text", each piece requires a close examination of the particular uses of language - the tone, the evasions or omissions, the particular uses of irony, imagery or symbolism in it. A study of similar pieces may reveal an individual, perhaps highly idiosyncratic rhetoric and form throughout, which could lead to attempts at classification of such examples of text into genres, involving, too considerations of audience and intention. Secondly, textual study such as this can then be used as a way of releasing the wider cultural meanings embedded in them. While space does not permit me to discuss the details of such an approach so far as the total English curriculum is concerned, I would argue that this approach is in line with all our modern thinking about the development of langauge competence in our students. A wide range of reading, writing, speaking and listening activities could be employed in such text study and extensions of it (in the area of student production of their own texts). It is in line with Dixon's important reminder:

> Language is learned in operation, not by dummy runs. In English, pupils meet to share their encounters with life, and to do this effectivley they move freely between dialogue and monologue - between talk, drama and writing; and literature, by bringing new voices into the classroom ..." (1975: 13)

There is no reason either why such textual study cannot be closely linked to the study of literary texts. After all, in literature we have yet another form of text created, in this case, for aesthetic purposes. A thematic unit of work could be developed around, for example, the "Literature" of Violence. Some examples of text here might be:

- T.V. crime shows - police drama, spy thrillers
- films - "The Godfather", "The Shining", "The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith"
- literary texts - clearly there is an abundance of these from the Bible and Shakespeare to the books from which the above films were adpated, not forgetting the wealth of war literature and works by Orwell, Hemingway and William Golding, to mention just a few.
- news reports - broadcast and print media (for the violence of the "real" world).

All lend themselves to:

1. examinations of the conventions as far as character, plot or narrative structure and theme are concerned, whether these conventions are fractured in any of the pieces under consideration and, if so, to what end.
2. discussions of the medium - film, print, etc. - how the text is shaped by the medium
3. the different intentions of the creators of the text - questions of audience will arise here
4. discussions of language use in the texts - how and why different varieties of langauge are used.
5. some attempt, perhaps only with older years, at genre classification
6. world view - the cultural meanings of the texts (various ideological considerations may arise here).

Here, too, students may well consider their own response to the texts - how they (the texts) affect the individual's perceptions of reality. From such a comparative treatment of texts, a good teacher should be able to guide students towards discovering for themselves the fact that (good) literature, as a medium of communication, speaks directly and personally to the individual. The literary text reveals language used scrupulously. The artist's vision and the rich suggestiveness of the language make possible sharp social and psychological definition allowing the writer to recreate life in all its immediacy, distinctiveness and multi-facetedness. Literature is clearly a part of the living culture that cuts across age, sex and class barriers.

In contrast, the media use language manipulatively to sell products and the way of life associated with them. The media do not question reality; they see their role, rather, as persuading people to accept the reality society offers them. Media language, in contrast also to literature, is rootless, undifferentiated and thus divorced from lived experience in time and place. Because the appeal is to the group and not to the individual, there is a resultant loss in particularity and diversity of the experiences presented, and a reliance instead on the generalised, the stereotyped and the clichéd. These points can also be demonstrated through the study of text suggested above.

Of course I have been speaking very generally about mass media here and so as not to be accused of cultural "Luddism" (a term much in use at present), I wish to add an important qualification to what I have said above. While many mass media offerings are mindless and trivial examples of pseudo-culture, there are, clearly, many examples of worthwhile films, and T.V. programmes, and excellent examples of responsible journalism.

Thus it is important that discrimination training accompany the study of text. We need to provide students with the tools to determine critically a good media offering from a bad one, in the same way, hopefully, as we provide them with the tools to discriminate between mediocre literature and a great work. As teachers of English in the '80s, we should be working towards producing people able to critically evaluate a wide variety of cultural forms.

But it is important to remember that along-side aesthetic judgements need to be placed political ones. These, I believe, cannot be avoided in mass media study whereas perhaps they may be in the study of a Shakespearean sonnet (though personally I would see wider cultural and ideological questions as important in most literary contexts as well).

Thus we must not simply teach about mass media from an aesthetic point of view but consider at all times in the study of the texts, their functions and values as well. It is not sufficient for students to be able to discriminate between T.V. kitsch and a worthwhile programme, or between a clever advertisement and a blatant and tasteless one, we need to return always to examine the wider social and cultural questions intrinsic to the production and distribution of the mass media. Clearly, questions of ownership and control are central here.

In the same vein, it is not enough to produce students competent in the techniques of media production - though it is valuable for mass media courses to provide "hands-on" experience of the technology. It is certainly valuable for students to have had practice in making a radio programme or in writing a workable T.V. comedy script or in designing an effective advertisement, but these activities must always be regarded as subordinate to or an adjunct to the examination of radio or T.V. or film as elements in our culture.

John Stuart Mill could have been speaking of our own age when he wrote in his essay on Coleridge:

> Both sides were in the right in what they affirmed, but wrong in what they denied ... take for instance the question how far mankind has gained by civilisation. One man is forcibly struck by the multiplication of physical comforts; the advancement and diffusion of knowledge; the decay of superstition; the facilities of mutual intercourse; the softening of manners ... the great works accomplished ... and he becomes that very common character, the worshipper of 'our enlightened age'. Another fixes his attention, not upon the value of these advantages, but upon the high price which is paid for them; the relaxation of individual energy and courage, the loss of proud and self-relying independence; the slavery of so large a portion of manking to artificial wants ... the dull unexciting monotony of their lives, and the passionless insipidity, and absence of any marked individuality in their characters ...

While these are but broad generalisations about culture, I believe they point out the need for English teachers to engage their students in an examination of our culture and the way it is evolving - and how better than through a study of texts as cultural artifacts?

References

J. Dixon, Growth Through English: set in the perspective of the seventies. Oxford University Press, 1975.

N. Fruchter, "Games in the Arena. Movement Propaganda and the Culture of the Spectacle". Liberation, May 1971.

T. Gitlin, "16 Notes on Television and the Movement" in Literature in Revolution, ed., G. White and G. Newman. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

R. Williams, "Communications and Community", William F. Harvey Memorial Lecture, Bedford College, London University, 1961.

SAMPLES - SIMPLES

Geoffrey Summerfield (ENGLAND)

> *(At the conference) it seemed all too difficult for us to shake loose from the idea that literature in schools is a collection of texts to be studied by permission of the academic guardians of high culture, most of whom were elsewhere when the conference took place.*
>
> (Margaret Meek)

First, let me confess to considerable unease in offering examples of my teaching as exemplary. An example is not merely a case, but, by etymology, a sample offered as something worthy of imitation. But I am forced to take consolation in some of the secondary meanings of the word, since 'example' can also signify a 'warning', a 'something not to be imitated'. I agree, therefore, to make an example of myself! But first I would like to offer some generalizations about teaching and its contexts.

We must all be aware of the disparity between a vision of a possibility, an envisioned ideal, on the one hand - warm, well-shaped, enlivening - and the actuality, clumsy, untidy, indeterminate, on the other: art versus act. And, moreover, we know that the very ways in which we offer a report on experience tend to pre-empt, to select and shape in ways that offer a neat, even elegant, morally defensible, simulacrum. Unconscious editing occurs at, or just before, the point of utterance, so that we tend to put only our best selves forward for inspection. And I confess that I know of no manner of report that can truly capture and present all the momentary, subtle, and often contradictory elements of teaching in practice.

A simple example may suffice: a student glances at her watch. The glance means 'When will this weariness end?' or it means 'Are we going to have enough time to finish this work?'. As a teacher, I am disposed to notice those fragments of behaviour which can be interpreted positively, as re-affirming my competence. Conversely, I am strongly pre-disposed to fail to observe signals that tell of disenchantment or disaffection.

So much, then, for the provisional and tendentious nature of this report, its being knee-deep in the inescapably personal. From here in, you will simply have to take it on trust!

When the University of York English Department was established sixteen or so years ago, it was committed to two essential principles. The first was that methods of assessment should be as various as possible; that several proper alternatives to the traditional 3-hour examination (Finals!) had to be found. As a result, several methods were offered, and the response of students has been favourable, even though the possible number of variables was necessarily restricted by the inbuilt constraints of any institution.

The second principle was that, although staff could offer lectures, the core of the department's teaching should be done in seminar and tutorials.

The tutorial - one tutor to one student - fell prey to the pressure of numbers, and was modified to one tutor to two (or even three) students. Still, it was possible to build into one's work with students a weekly meeting that respected, and drew on, the model of critical, liberal, humanistic conversation that is one of the best legacies of an admittedly elitist liberal-humanist tradition in higher education: a meeting of minds, well prepared, reasonably well tuned, that could offer an occasion for challenge, for re-thinking, for refining, for clarifying, for sharpening the focus; for positive surmise and speculation, and for raising the next stage of questions - going in more deeply, and also leading out to consider the ramifications, the further possibilities, the ripple of implications.

Such teaching is of course, a remarkable luxury, if only because it is, in crude economic terms, ostensibly less cost-effective than the barbaric American habit of lecturing to a thousand students. At the beginning of each term, one looked at the timetable of seminars and felt light-headed and over-paid; then, having met one's students and blocked in all the necessary tutorial-times, - hey presto! - the workload and commitment of time immediately felt quite onerous.

The traditional model for a tutorial is that each week the student shall bring an essay, read it, and receive criticism from the tutor. I'm still not convinced that one can thus ensure that the act of writing will itself constitute, unavoidably, a valuable learning-experience for the student. In this respect one has to learn to care and not to care, but on the whole my verdict on tutorials is that they are invaluable, both specially in terms of paying attention to a text, and also, less explicitly, as a way of getting to know, and assess, one's students, as a way of building a sense of shared enterprise, and, at best, as a way of building mutual respect and trust.

What, then, of seminars? We owe the term, seminar, to the Latin 'seminarium', a seed-bed, a seed-plot. Push back, etymologically, into 'semen', seed, and the image of the seed-bed becomes much richer, involving ideas of generation, of creative conditions, of good soil and fine tilth, of germinating principles, of the healthy growth of new life under the benign regime of good husbandry.

One has only to explore such a field of meanings in order to feel a quickening of some vernal pulse, a renewed and enlivened sense of the rich possibilities of the enterprise of teaching; one is reminded of Eliot's phrase in Four Quartets: 'the life of significant soil'. The metaphors are indeed pregnant with green beginnings, productive directions, and the possibility of good fruit. But what of that which is signified?

It is a group of ten to fifteen students and a tutor. They meet round a table. They put their books and notebooks on the table. What then? Who is to lead? Who is to listen? What are the present intentions of each mind? How is each to participate? How rule-governed is the conduct? How formal are the procedures to be? How free is the 'flow' of ideas, responses, interactions to be? Are roles clearly perceived?

Briefly, the fact is that we don't, in general, know the answers to these questions. Of all levels of education, it is the tertiary that has most successfully resisted the cool eye of the researcher: certainly we all know far more about what goes on in school classrooms than about university or college seminar-rooms, let alone tutorials; higher education remains for the most part a complete enigma, an arcane sanctum sanctorum, as far as its pedagogy is concerned; and it is, of course, an open secret that some university lecturers take some pleasure in not taking their teaching seriously: which is, I think, a pity, since it would be better for the morale of students if their tutors were not merely clever but also intelligent. Small dents have been made in the opaque carapace of higher teaching, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, but I shall be surprised if there is any noticeable progress in the foreseeable future.

Let me, then, offer a resume of the informal reports of students over the past fifteen years, in the conviction that generally students err on the side of generosity when speaking of their elders and betters.

At one extreme, many seminars consist of the tutor's offering an off-the-cuff, informal, unscripted, unprepared (in a formal sense), rather rambling 'lecture' for up to two hours, to students whose role is primarily, often exclusively, to listen (or daydream, or doodle). This is the syndrome of the tutor-as-compulsive-talker-at-a-captive audience. This particular aberration seems to occur most insistently in the case of tutors who are under the influence of a writer who can be construed as a moral prophet - D.H. Lawrence is the obvious case - and they fall into the reprehensible habit of preaching to their congregation. English departments should install pulpits.

At the other extreme, a tutor will relegate specific, clearly designed, tasks to the students: one of them has to prepare a position-paper; another is to respond; each of the other students is to contribute in a clearly perceived fashion; the tutor's role is to do the work of chairman, arbitrator, clarifier, nudger, provoker, and devil's advocate.

Most seminars, it seems, fall somewhere between these two extremes, but in general most students perceive, or recall, most of their seminar-time as spent in listening. Similarly, most students recall the seminar as having persisted as one group for between one and two hours, no provision having been made for breaking the group down into a variety of smaller interacting sub-groups or conversations.

What emerges is a fairly serious degree of role-uncertainty, a fairly damaging absence of clear intentionality, and an excess of relative passivity: in essence, an experience of comparative inaction. The saddest case that I know of was that of a woman student in a seminar-group whose tutor left the students to work out and establish their own roles: each had somehow to break into the on-going dialogue, so as to lay claim to the right to participate. The unfortunate student failed to do so in the first two weeks of the term - she was certainly shy and diffident - and as a result of her preliminary silence she was afraid to be heard to speak for the rest of the term, and so remained silent! In such a situation, there is clearly a premium on certain kinds of confidence and social skills, and no matter how intelligent the shy person may be, their talents remain quite wasted: inaction bred inaction; silence fostered silence.

Such inactivity is, of course, quite unlike our best selves when engaged in reading a complex text: as an example of a nimble and searching mind doing just this, take a look at Seamus Heaney's reading of Wordsworth and Hopkins, in Preoccupations, Faber, 1980.

A contradiction emerges, then, in the contrast between the animation of mind that most students bring to their reading of a text, and the relatively low level of active participation that they experience when discussing their reading. But what activities other than discussion can legitimately, usefully, occur in a seminar? Is there any alternative to discussion of an experience (i.e. reading) that has already been completed before the discussion actually starts? Why is such discussion closer to a record of a past event that it is to a report of a concurrent event?

I suggest that there need be, and there can be, many profitable alternatives to such posthumous discussion. If close, intense, alert reading is in question, then there is clearly a need for such reading to take place not only before, but also during, the seminar. And if poetry, or a dramatic text, is the focus of attention, then time must be found for reading aloud. And the reading-aloud, which is inescapably an act of interpretation, of expressing or representing meanings, may become the matter for discussion: the nuance, tone, pace, modulations of the reading must be considered. And if there is a reading-aloud, then there is something immediate to be considered: the text-as-read; each student may then disagree not with the awesomely authoritative text, the holy writ, but with a neighbour's reading of it. To put it another way, attention is given to something that is presently immediate, and shared, and set against the hinterland, the context, of each individual's prior experience of the text or of similar texts. What we so often fail to attend to, in this respect, is the experience of reading, in all its ebb and flow, up and down, variable dynamic: too often, our discussions look back at the text now safely stabilized and come to rest, somewhere in the past. Good criticism - Seamus Heaney on Hopkins, for example - brings the text back vividly to the immediate present: we look over the reader's shoulder as he reads and appreciates the text, from word to word, line to line.

But reading aloud is a neglected act (or, at best, art). I recall an occasion when I met for the first time a group of third year undergraduates who had elected to take my course in 20th century literature. One of the first questions that I put to them was: 'How often do you read aloud?' Their raised eyebrows signified, not 'Rarely', but 'Never!'. It so happened that one of the texts that I wanted them to study was David Jones's In Parenthesis. Despite the fact the Jones has an intense coterie following, it's clear that the poem - if that is what it is! - is one of the most remarkable under-recognized masterpieces of our literature. It is an exploration of a few episodes in the first world war that slowly takes up into itself an astonishing variety of historical, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic matters, not to mention Jones's Christianity: and a great variety of voices, both past and present, are implicated. The distinctive cadences of Welsh English and of Cockney English offer much to the poem's rhetorical energy, and the whole thing must be heard, as BBC Radio 3 have long recognized. But it is a long work, and to read it aloud, without excisions, can take up to six hours. How then to proceed? I simply asked the students to get together in their own time and read it aloud.

They met one evening, and finished their reading in the early hours: ah, the stamina of youth! Fortified by coffee, sandwiches, and a sense of occasion, they became involved in a memorable experience. Afterwards, when they had recovered, something was felt congenially and powerfully to have happened: thus, we had something of value to explore and reconsider: a collaborative act of shared interpretation, which we could then go on to argue over, looking closely at crucial parts of the text.

As a teacher, I am the victim of inertia: I fall too readily into the habit of teaching from hand to mouth. I need to counteract by allowing myself, or forcing myself, to live dangerously, to employ unfamiliar, even disconcerting, techniques.

A few months ago, a colleague who was teaching a course in 19th century American literature asked me to offer her students a seminar: I said I would be happy to oblige, and that the poetry of Walt Whitman would come under scrutiny. I already knew all the stock responses of Honours English students to Whitman: brash, noisy, confused, shapeless, loose, overbearing. Yet I believe him to be in his best poems a delicate, scrupulous and subtle artist. So I laid my traps. For the first ten minutes I quickly showed them many slides of American cities - New York and Chicago in particular - and asked them to jot down, without thinking, their reactions. I then asked them to pair off and gave to each pair a 'jig-saw puzzle' - a Whitman poem cut up into fragments; and I asked them to re-assemble their poem. I asked one pair to collate the reactions to the slides, picking out all the evaluative terms.

The jig-saw task was performed with quiet intensity and some interesting exchanges, sotto voce. The reactions to the slides boiled down to such pejorative terms as 'brash, noisy, confused, shapeless, brutal, overbearing, disgusting'. I then asked a student to read from a sheet on which I had written extracts from early British reviews of Whitman. I didn't reveal the identity of the object of the reviews, or give their source. Each jigsaw pair then reported back to the rest of the group, explaining how exactly they had made sense of their broken text and restored it to coherence. Each pair read their poem without comment or interruption; the collators read the pejoratives that the group had used of the slides. I then picked out all the corresponding terms from the reviews of Whitman and explained where they had come from. Then I read short extracts from my favourite Whitman poems and also one or two key sentences from Randall Jarrell's essay on Whitman. I'm still not sure that any of those students has yet come to share my affection and respect for Whitman, but no matter. What they seemed to come away with was the notion that their pejorative view of American cities was partly defensible, partly questionable: questionable insofar as it was an uncritically held stock response*: defensible insofar as much of N.Y.C. and Chicago is demonstrably awful! But, more important, they discovered for themselves that the poet who had had mud slung at him, was indeed capable of creating quiet and tender constructions, capable of a coherent and delicate music, and of clear sense into the bargain. In an hour and a half they had not learned a great deal about Whitman, but I think that they had become undeniably interested in his poetry: in the co-existence in it of a curious afflatus and of an unaffectedly poignant, delighted, naked voice. The poet without a mask, as Thomas Eakins recognized.

I recently enjoyed the experience of taking a seminar at the University of Sydney: not alone, but in tandem with a student. The topic was 'poetry for young readers', and Jenny and I spent an evening in planning how best to use our two hours. My first suggestion was that we should divide the 120 minutes into 12 ten-minute segments.

Let me explain. A few years ago I taught a class at the University of California, Berkeley, an evening class, entitled 'Advanced Composition', attended by thirty four students, and lasting two hours. Most of the students were connoisseurs of two-hour classes, and arrived with emphatically dismal expectations, expecting to have their noses pressed continuously onto one grindstone until duly blunted: they believed simply that most teaching-sessions went on far too long. I agreed, and began by breaking our sessions into very short segments in which they would work furiously against the clock: short assignments of great variety, - so many of them that if one of them failed to light the touch-paper, little was lost. For much of the time we spent together in the first half of the term, all the work was 'a beginning', and they warmed to the variety, the pace, the unpredictability, the fact that they could throw a draft away without losing face. And each student ended each class with three or four beginnings that were worth taking further, worth sweating over at home. So they played the whole keyboard in rather a prestissimo way and found three or four chords that delighted their ears, and that promised some possibility of fulfilment.

I applied the same technique to the Sydney seminar. Three students, given two weeks' notice, were asked to kick off with an account of the place of poetry in their private lives: Jenny chose her trio well, and they offered a variety of stories. Then followed a brief account of Cinderella Dressed in Yella, and of the Opies' volumes of street-rhymes; then we explored Ian Turner's notion of functions - if verse persists in folk-lore, it clearly performs important functions. What could they be? From this, we went on to try to isolate the criterial characteristics of poetry; then to the teacher's uncertainties vis a vis poetry in the classroom - 'what to do with it?'....At some point, each student was actively involved; and the modes of discourse that were used ranged from the informational/instructional, to the dialogical, speculative surmise ('thinking aloud', 'wondering'), autobiographical, reading aloud, evaluation, and finally a group-performance of a suitable poem: this conclusion was important, for everyone joined in with relish - the poem was Edwin Morgan's Canedolia - and so exemplified some of the values that we had been educing. It was a congenial way of making intelligence active, and shared: and we all left, feeling that 'something had happened'.

---

* questionable, too, in that some of the images were of undeniably exciting vistas.

P.S. What, of course, has escaped in all this is something so fundamental as to be preconscious: something to do with the pleasures of being with other people (i.e. students), of enjoying the sounds of their voices, their groans, and their laughter: of the peculiar fission of adrenalin, the contrary pleasure of nervous uncertainty; the deep satisfaction of absorption, of self-forgetfulness: the sheer pleasure of work, when vocation and avocation are blent.

BEYOND ENGLISH AND THE CLASSROOM

Ian Reid (AUSTRALIA)

> "What better ways have we actually found of 'sharing' a text? How can we henceforth ensure that our interventions amount to something more enlivening than a blanketing imposition? Such questions invite me to invoke an inalienable principle - that of the active learner."
>
> (Geoff Summerfield)

New impulses, old chestnuts.

Formally, during the plenary sessions, and more informally in seminar discussions one had to be aware that there was much criticism of English teaching in the universities. Some of the criticism was strident and some more thoughtful but too often comments were harmful in trying to reinforce the old chestnut that all tribulations of English teachers in the primary and secondary sectors result from reactionary views in the tertiary sector.

Now whether or not that levelling of blame reflects accurately the current realities of educational politics in England, it does not fit all the facts in Australia. Here, the influence of university English departments over, for instance, Higher School Certificate and Matriculation courses varies from state to state, and is a minority voice in some cases. Moreover, the true situation in Australian education, and probably elsewhere, is that a whole spectrum of attitudes and practices in English teaching, from the very reactionary to the very innovative, can be found at all levels. What follows here is an account of one important area of tertiary experimentation.

Innovations in the teaching of literature at Deakin University.

About half the students enrolled for courses in the School of Humanities at Australia'a newest university, Deakin, do not attend any classes on campus. The provision of high-quality external studies, on the general model of England's Open Universoty, is Deakin's prime raison d'être. Study guide books, professionally edited, designed and printed, are supplied with other course materials such as cassette tapes to all off campus students, who use them in lieu of class contact, and also to on campus students, who use them in addition to class contact.

Accordingly, teaching literature at Deakin is a very different activity from teaching literature in most universities. For one thing, lectures are hardly ever held. There are regular tutorials for on-campus students, and occasional tutorials (in regional study centres) for off campus students. But even these classes are of secondary importance, since the study booklets are intended to be used in a self-instructional way. They are neither text books nor printed lecture notes, but rather guides to student activity; the main emphasis is on exercises and questions that arise from the prescribed reading. Another distinctive feature of teaching literature at Deakin is that the processes of preparing study materials and maintaining courses are fully collaborative. All teaching is devised and implemented by course teams, not by individuals. This does not mean that individual teachers are coerced by colleagues into presenting the material for which they are primarily responsible in a way they find repugnant. What it does mean, for instance, is that anyone who drafts a section of a study guide, with whatever personal expertise, can benefit from the detailed comments of (perhaps) half a dozen others who are engaged with him or her in a joint enterprise. Decisions about every aspect of a course, from the lists of recommended reading to the choice of audio-visual aids or the wording of an assignment topic, can be worked out collectively.

Not only the teaching procedures but also the contents of literature courses at Deakin are fairly unusual. There is no English Department; indeed there are no departments at all. The School of Humanities has an inter-disciplinary system, within which certain courses are designated as part of a loosely defined 'Literature' area. Literature, not English : the usual boundaries of 'English' syllabuses are stretched in four directions. First, there is a deliberate testing of traditional lines of disciplinary demarcation; opera and film, for example, are regarded as just as germane to literacy studies as is drama; historiography is examined alongside historical fiction. Second, the scope of syllabuses is international and comparative; English is simply the language in which studies are conducted (with judicious use of translations where necessary). Third, there is a greater socio-cultural range than is normal in most English department curricula; serious attention is given to several sorts of so-called 'sub-literary' phenomena, such as folk song, oral narrative and 'children's literature'. Fourth, students are expected not only to produce some orthodox formal essays but also to experiment creatively with various sorts of writing.

Underlying these extensions of traditional English studies is a conviction that any respectable literary criticism must be grounded in a comprehensive and continuous theroetical inquiry into the nature of literature. The aim at Deakin is not to replace one orthodoxy about curricular content with another orthodoxy, but to introduce into all courses a self-analytical procedure whereby the definition of the subject itself constitutes and reconstitutes that subject.

It is obvious that within such a new framework some practical problems might arise. How can one ensure that this difficult process of redefining literary studies is shared constructively by the students rather than imposed on them? What are the nitty-gritty realities of trying to incorporate creative writing into advanced level work? If classes are no longer the central mode of contact with students, what role is left for the teacher in the classroom? And in syllabuses which offer such a miscellany of things to read, what has happened to evaluative critical norms? There may well be other pertinent questions, but those are enough to consider in the present article.

Student participation.

Since our main teaching vehicle is the study guide, and print can seem a formidably authoritarian medium, teachers of literature at Deakin have to take great pains to undercut the unilateral and monolithic appearance of page after page of text. Our aim is to encourage students to interact critically - and creatively - with what we have written for them, and we attempt this by several means. Some are detailed matters of typography and lay-out. For instance, we set off exercises in a different type-face, and run a line across the page at that point to deter students from proceeding immediately to the subsequent section, headed 'Discussion'. We insert small margin notes of an informal sort to remind them that points of view presented in the Discussion are not necessarily gospel : for instance, "Don't take this as a model answer; it is just one possible train of thought", or, "Some alternative considerations are mentioned by X in the article you read last week; see whether you can call them to mind now, and compare X's views with those expressed here." Pictures are used to break up the solidity of the printed text, but seldom in a merely decorative way. Most of their captions link them directly with the accompanying discussion, sometimes by posing further explicit questions.

In addition to introducing specific exercises frequently, we try also to cast as much of our study guide material as possible in an interrogative style. Course team members develop the habit, when working on drafts, of watching vigilantly for any avoidable tendency to 'tell' too much, and offending passages are recast in a more tentative tone. In addition we make frequent cross reference from the study guides to audiotapes (which include a variety of materials such as interviews, informal group discussions, and dramatized readings) and to articles reprinted in a separate booklet of readings.

Creativity without an English teacher?

It is all too true that most university English departments in Australia have resisted the idea that creative writing is centrally important to literary studies. Very few of them have courses in creative writing, and even those few still confine it to a hole in the corner. In extenuation, it should be said that this resistance results partly from a justifiable dissatisfaction with the way some (by no means all) secondary teachers have taught creative writing - that is, as a matter of undisciplined self-expression for self-expression's sake, a spontaneous overflow of feelings that may be far from powerful and that have not been through the alembic of tranquil recollection. Silly though the prejudice against creative writing in the universities often is, it can usefully draw our attention to T.S. Eliot's remark that "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium".

Studying Literature at Deakin means not only learning versatility as a reader, but also experimenting creatively with various sorts of writing. In this respect Deakin's emphasis is radically different from that of other tertiary institutions; and yet it differs, too, from an encouragement of mere self-expression.

All Literature courses at Deakin, while allowing a place for some critical essays, try to deter students from thinking that their prime task is to analyse or appreciate parasitically what others have written. Assignment topics and suggestions for day-to-day work stem from the conviction that whatever talents a student has for writing, it can only be beneficial to exercise them on more than just orthodox discursive commentaries. What is frequently asked of the Deakin neophyte in literary studies is an inventive piece of work written in relation to something he or she has just been reading. Is this practice in danger of restricting originality or substituting literature for life as the main stimulus to creative composition? No, because literature is *part of* life, not something *apart from* it; and because by shaping communications of their own with someone else's communication specifically in mind, students are simultaneously refining their own verbal skills and refining their awareness of what constitutes a given text. When producing as part of the requirement for a Deakin course some experiments in, say, transmuting autobiographical fact into fiction (alongside their reading of Whitman), or telling the 'same' episode from two points of view (alongside their reading of Faulkner), or utilizing the comic potential of the *ottava rima* verse form (having observed closely Byron's technique), or devising ways of fusing poetry with social protest (having observed closely the methods used by Blake and Dylan), or outlining a script that would re-work elements of a classical Greek play in modern terms, they are able *to experience processes of literary creation from the inside*. And they are learning that creation and criticism go hand in hand, that good reading and good writing are two sides of the same coin.

A teacher without a class?

Once the study guides are written, what do teachers at Deakin *do*? Have they made themselves redundant? How are the printed materials followed through to ensure that the student is learning from them?

It is important, first, to underline a fact mentioned earlier : that, unlike England's Open University, Deakin does have on campus students in addition to those further afield. This means that there is continiuous direct feedback to teachers. Second, it needs to be stressed that the tutorial or discussion group can afford to be much more adventurous, much more flexible, in the Deakin situation than elsewhere. The study guides, being designed as 'tutorials in print', have already taken care of most of the functions of the traditional small-class forum; with basic issues already summarized in an orderly, concise and interrogative way, the teacher feels more free to move with the class into byways or alternative lines of inquiry. The same is true of the Weekend Seminars for off-campus students : a variety of topics can be generated spontaneously. Moreover, there is ample room for *ad hoc* readings and informal discussions based on the students' notebooks.

Here is what students are told right at the beginning of a course about the importance of their notebooks :

> It is intended that the notebook should be used constantly and variously. Think of it as combining the functions of resource file, personal journal, drawing board, work bench, tool kit, fellow student.... It can include, if you like, quite informal or intimate diary entries, because you will *not* be required to submit the whole thing for assessment. But it should in any case be the focus of your own day-to-day responses to

> the course. Throughout the year you will be encouraged to make a record of what you think about what you read, and to develop some of these reactions into creative writing, formal essays, and so forth. In this way the notebook should generate most of your written work, and the quality of what you transcribe and reshape and polish will depend to an important extent on the level of mental activity maintained in the notebook. Motifs will be used regularly in the margins of the study guides as memoranda to use your notebook, but you should write in it more often than that. Your insights and prejudices, your doubts and discoveries : note these down as a matter of habit and review them frequently.

Students often quote from, or refer to, their notebooks during class discussion; but they do so at their own discretion, not at a teacher's bidding.

One further feature of classroom work at Deakin is that teachers frequently share sessions. Since there are fewer classes than in a traditional system, and since the study guides on which work is based have been jointly prepared by a course team, it is both feasible and desirable for two or more teachers to participate in a discussion group with students. This has many advantages, including most obviously for the teachers an opportunity to learn from each other and for the students a demonstration that there is no presiding authority in the group.

But what about training in values?

It may seem that by encouraging the 'ungifted' to plunge into creative writing and by including 'sub-literary' texts in the syllabus, teachers of Literature at Deakin are throwing discrimination to the winds. A commonly adduced reason for keeping low-brow material out of English courses is that students will read too much of that stuff anyway, and that far from encouraging them to take it seriously we should be sensitizing their tender minds to higher things. Only by unremitting exposure to the great literary touchstones - so the old argument goes - will students be led to see the banality of everything else. However, it seldom turns out like that in reality. Instead, if students are not formally required to consider without prejudice all sorts of texts, to apply an analytical intelligence to folk art as well as aristocratic art, to the oral as well as the written, to cinematic as well as novelistic compositions and so forth, what usually results is an uncritical double standard. Much harm is done by a premature insistence in schools and universities on value judgements. Certainly evaluative questions are involved in all our reading and writing. But unless approached gradually and obliquely they can stifle responsiveness and discrimination. The soundest discriminatory skills are learned through first-hand experience with a variety of kinds of reading and writing.

DIVERGENCE AND CONTINUITY : THE LITERATURE COMMISSION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Peter Putnis (AUSTRALIA)

> "Perhaps the first thing we need to do is to abandon the counter-production habit of giving our pupils our own finished and coherent accounts of our experience of test *after the event*. Much of the literature that we "teach" is comfortably familiar to us, manageable, grasped, fixed settled, non-problematic, and well documented with critical commentary; so we are in danger of offering a kind of coroner's inquest, even a post mortem; of failing to make ourselves available to our pupils as *active* readers involved in the tentative process of *making* meaning, *making* sense, of a hitherto unknown text."
>
> (Geoff Summerfield)

As the lectures and discussions continued certain words, phrases and questions emerged as central to our concerns as teachers of literature. What kind of response to literature are we seeking from our students? What is more important - that a poem or story be fully understood or that is elicit an honest, if partial and tentative, response? What is the role of the teacher in the classroom and, more fundamentally, what does "teaching" or, indeed, "studying" literature really mean? What of writing about literature? Should we make a distinction between critical writing and writing that is a free response *to* (rather than *about*) a particular story or poem? And what is the purpose of each type of exercise? Certainly these are all familiar questions that have been asked many times. And they were in fact suggested by the pre-Conference reading and in the programme itself. But in the course of five days of listening, talking, reading and writing the old questions took on new resonances, new nuances. Again the certainties, assumptions, familiar procedures needed to be reassessed. And constantly one was comparing - comparing the ideals of literature teaching articulated so convincingly by the speakers with the realities of everyday working life, comparing their ideal English teacher with the fact of one's own limitations, comparing theory and practice, how things should be done with how they are done. And in my own case also comparing problems and issues raised about English in the school system with my experience of teaching literature in a College of Advanced Education.

The following observations arise from comparisons such as these. In particular from an attempt to relate ideas raised in the Commission to aspects of College literature teaching. First of all, a general observation.

CONTINUITY

One key word to emerge in discussion was "continuity". We noted that it is important to establish a continuity between the real-life experiences of the student and the "placed" experiences of the literary text. Where the texts themselves are not readily accessible, general discussion of situations might, as it were, get the student to "come to where the poem is". There should be continuity amongst the texts themselves. Links should be established; the encounter with literature should be an ongoing "conversation" amongst pupil, teacher and text, a shared exploration that develops its own continuity of feelings, questions and perceptions.

On a more obvious plane there should be continuity in the teaching of literature between the various levels of our education system - primary, secondary and tertiary. Any notion of "making a fresh start" at any level of education is a presumptuous delusion.

The importance of continuity between primary and secondary teaching has long been recognized. Indeed the Literature Commission itself was evidence of constructive interraction between primary and secondary English teachers. But what of the tertiary sector? A feature of the Literature Commission was the absence of significant numbers of tertiary teachers of literature, particularly of college and university academics not directly involved in teacher education. This, despite the large proportion of secondary students that go on to higher studies, despite the fact that large numbers of tertiary students become teachers, despite the obvious common problems.

There is a major discontinuity in English teaching in Australia, at least. There is a gulf between secondary and higher education, a gulf which must be bridged as it can only be to the detriment of literary studies as a whole. Tertiary educators must have a sound knowledge of students' secondary experience lest their own courses imply false assumptions about that experience or make unrealistic demands. Most importantly, students have a right to expect a continuity of purpose and direction in their education. Moreover, tertiary teachers can only gain from the kind of sustained thinking about the place of literature and its teaching that was evident at the Literature Commission.

This general observation about the importance of continuity is confirmed when one considers particular aspects of literature teaching.

COMMON ASSUMPTIONS IN TERTIARY TEACHING

One focus of discussion in the Commission was on the importance of direct, immediate and shared experience of literature in the classroom - reading, listening, improvising. It was recognized that the task was to facilitate the actual experience of the work, to achieve a genuine and strongly felt experience. The teacher sought to promote this kind of understanding and engagement in the classroom.

In much tertiary teaching the actual experience of the literary work is assumed rather than taught. Certainly the classroom is a place to compare, refine and deepen experiences, but the reading itself, the experience itself, is a private one, done in preparation for class. The assumption is that students are able themselves to understand and respond in private to a level where they can later come together and meaningfully compare perceptions and experiences. Ideally they will have read and studied the work in such a way as to now enable them to draw freely on all parts of the work to illustrate the points they wish to make. In other words, they will have already comprehended the work as a whole literatury creation.

Daily experience shows that such "ideal" preparation for class rarely occurs. More fundamentally, the assumption that the actual experience of literature is the business of the individual student and that most students do, in fact, achieve a "feeling comprehension" of the text before coming to class is open to serious question, particularly given the wide range of abilities of students who now undertake literary studies at tertiary level. It is an obvious fact that the literature must be truly experienced before any critical discussion can be worthwhile. Moreover, it is essential that critical discussion genuinely grows out of personal response to the literature. It remains true, as D.W. Harding pointed out in his report on the Dartmouth Seminar, that "many students arrive at and leave universities with an unprofitable distrust of their personal response to literature".[1.] All too often, it seems, classroom discussion is divorced from personal response. The danger is that it becomes a phoney experience, a kind of "after the event" activity in which there is not even any certainty that the "event" ever actually took place. The actual experience of the literary work cannot be assumed, it must be the business of the classroom.

There was much discussion in the Commission about how to determine the suitability for study of particular works. The concern was that works should be challenging yet within the experiential and linguistic range of students. Selection of texts was to be based on student interests and needs rather than on any concept of "cultural heritage" or "great books". One can contrast this student-response oriented approach with the subject and content orientation current in most tertiary institutions. There is the idea that literature, particularly English literature, does have specific content. Certain periods, certain authors must be "covered" if the course is to retain integrity and substance. And, of course, there are strong arguments to support this view. Nevertheless, the tenor of debate at the Literature Commission leads one to ask whether understanding and responding in depth is not being sacrificed for the sake of coverage. Whether, given students' secondary experience, tertiary educators are not making unrealistic demands upon students in terms of the number of texts studied. Whether "substance" is in fact achieved by large impressive lists of set texts.

TEACHING AND LECTURING

The position guide under which I am employed tells me that I'm a Lecturer in Literature. The title is rather ironic, given that the lecture has been largely discredited as a way of teaching literature. Certainly, it's true that the lecture is now being given less prominence and that the central importance of the seminar and tutorial discussion is being recognized. However, the dais has certainly not disappeared. After all, our buildings and classrooms have been constructed around the concept. Moreover, the need for so-called "efficient" use of resources will ensure the survival of the mass lecture.

Members of the Literature Commission were highly critical of any teaching method, like the lecture, which might encourage the teacher to tell students how to respond to a particular text. Methods of teaching and assessment should not inhibit the range and nature of students' responses. It is crucial that students develop their own response, rather than adopt any authoratitive versions presented by a lecturer. Teachers should avoid asking questions of their students in a way which might develop into a game of "guessing what's in the teacher's mind". The ideal is one of mutual, genuine exploration. The process is important, not the result.

There was some disagreement about the appropriate degree of teacher intervention in the classroom. At one extreme there was the view that teaching in itself may get in the way of students' imaginative encounters with literature. The teacher should be essentially passive, he should merely create an appropriate environment. On the whole, however, it was agreed that the teacher must be active in seeking to extend and sharpen student perceptions.

My own experience of non-intervnetion, necessitated by a fortuitous attack of laryngitis, was rather disappointing in what it suggested about the ability of tertiary students to read actively and responsively. Each member of a group of twelve first year education students undertaking a compulsory literature unit was asked to select a poem from the set anthology. He was to come to class prepared to read the poem and also to offer a brief commentary which he thought would help fellow students understand the poem more fully. Other students could then take up the discussion, asking questions and so on. When the class was satisfied that a particular poem was understood they would move on to the next one.

This, of course, was no controlled experiment. But nevertheless it was amazing how easily the students were satisfied, moving from poem to poem quite happy to gloss over difficulties, content to accept any simplification as long as it sounded like a summary statement of meaning. It was not as if analysis was being sought after; it was the perception, the reading itself that was poor. I was sorely tempted to intervene most actively, despite the laryngitis.

WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

In his report of the Dartmouth Seminar D.W. Harding warned that to encourage students to formulate their response to literary works in essay form was most often counter-productive. He wrote, "First encounters in the classroom should deliberately hold back formulation, should back away from everything that isn't tentative and partial".[2] He went on to suggest that in later encounters it is much more important to achieve a "feeling comprehension" of the text than to be able to formulate a descriptive statement about it. This notion was endorsed by most members of the Literature Commission, endorsed to the point where "tentative response" came to be identified with appropriate and genuine response. Formulation in essay form, or indeed in any form, was generally viewed with suspicion.

I mentioned this view to a colleague who happens to be a historian. He reminded me that it was most important for students to be able to make up their minds on the available evidence whether it be about an event in history, in politics, or in a novel. If you don't do it yourself, someone else will do it for you.

In most tertiary courses the ability to formulate response in essay form is given high priority. The two thousand word essay embodies many of the critical, expressive and organizational skills considered desirable. It could, of course, be argued that the development of such skills has nothing intrinsically to do with reading and responding to literature, that in emphasizing the skills associated with writing a coherent, well-argued essay the literature itself has become secondary, merely the raw material. It could also be argued that the emphasis on critical assignments is further evidence of an over-concern with end-products rather than processes, with summaries and conclusions rather than with ongoing explorations.

Certainly it is true that in tertiary studies more attention could be given to the stages and processes involved in generating a considered response rather than to the end-product itself. Premature rushes to judgement must be discouraged; judgement must be suspended while tentative interpretations are tested; dogmatic formulations are to be avoided; there must be a lively engagement with the text. Yet as far as the overall value of formulation is concerned surely what is true of language generally is also true of language used as a way of responding to literature. As John Dixon put it, we use language "to give meaning and order to the flux and fragments of reality. Thus we make use of the system and order of language to express the order we partly recognize in things. Until....we have written (or spoken), our recognitions and perceptions are less articulate, less explicit. Once we have written, they become not merely personal but shared, related to the socially made systems of thought and feeling that our language expresses." 3 The two thousand word essay may sometimes be an undesirable straightjacket, but writing about literature as such seems to me to be an essential means of exploration and discovery.

THE REJECTION OF ANALYSIS

In discussion within the Commission the rejection of analysis as a valuable way of responding to literature was virtually complete. Critical analysis was cold dissection, an essentially sterile process suitable only for irrelevant, ivory-tower academics. Literary studies at tertiary level were characterized by a mistaken and destructive emphasis on objective critical analysis, an emphasis which some teachers had unfortunately carried over into their secondary teaching. Certainly, the commission was evidence that, if the New Critics and their followers in the classroom have had their excesses in the past, they have now paid the price in terms of a wholesale grass-roots rejection of their assumptions and approaches.

As long ago as 1959, A. Alvarez pointed out that the transition from traditional scholarship to New Criticism in the post-war years ultimately involved the mere substitution of one "Dry-as-Dust" approach to literature for another.[4] Or as a more recent writer has put it "Instead of 'Another Source for Spenser's Maye' they were discovering 'Another Meaning for the Whiteness of the Whale'."[5] Description, classification, theory, rigor, detachment, the attempt to measure poetry by scientific and logical standards - these may have been fine as part of René Wellek and Austin Warren's attempt to generate "organised knowledge" about literature[6], but were hardly an appropriate way to experience literature in the classroom. I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism (1929) and Brooks and Warren's most influential college anthology Understanding Poetry (1938) may have been admirable in their concern for attention to the text, for emphasis on the reading itself rather than on peripheral matters, but they did nevertheless contribute to the tendency to reduce criticism to impersonal, descriptive analysis. Attention to the text could become absurdly attenuated explication - symbols must be hunted-down and found out, each word, no matter how seemingly innocent, must be fully investigated. Structures, techniques and literary devices could become more important than the responses they were designed to elicit. Rhythm was discussed rather than felt, and it was assumed that we could quite readily explain the way in which any particular poem achieved its effects.

It was in response to this kind of approach that Frank Whitehead wrote in 1968, "Our aim is....not that our pupils should be able to point to and name the 'methods' the writer has used in order to gain his 'effects'; what we are really out to do is ensure that they experience these effects as fully as possible."[7] Certainly this statement would have been enthusiastically endorsed by members of the Literature Commission. In fact, I wonder whether, given the wholesale rejection of analysis at the Commission, the endorsement of Whitehead's statement would not have been just a little over-enthusiastic. Whitehead's statement provides a valuable corrective to the excesses of the analysts and is doubtless proper in its emphasis. However, there is a danger that in our enthusiasm to reject analysis as such, we also end up de-emphasizing the importance of the text itself and of accurate reading and precise understanding. Members of the Commission were concerned to assert the importance of genuinely felt personal response and to recognize that response is a matter of feeling as well as understanding. Furthermore, the notion of "objectivity" was rejected as a limited way of perceiving, as a way of seeing inappropriate to that essentially affective organization of words that is poetry.

Once again one feels that while the emphasis on feeling may be a useful corrective, it is also fraught with danger. My own experience is that many students entering tertiary studies have not only rejected analysis but also (particularly with respect to poetry) the whole idea of close, attentive reading. In the name of avoiding dissection, they avoid comprehension. Moreover, the idea that one interpretation or reading is as good as any other is rife, despite its self-evident absurdity. "Why can't the poem mean anything I see and feel in it?" the student asks, not even recognizing the possibility that his perception may be limited. If the emphasis on feeling was a useful corrective to the notion of dispassionate analysis, perhaps it is time for the "felt response" to be given its own corrective. And here I would place Lionel Trilling's eloquent reminder of the true meaning and importance of objectivity in his 1972 Jefferson Lecture. Trilling notes with approval Mathew Arnold's definition of criticism as the effort "to see the object as in itself it really is" and goes on to say:

> "The aim of what we properly call objectivity is the fullest possible recognition of the integral and entire existence of the object......The object, whether it be a phenomenon of nature, or a work of art, or an idea or system of ideas, or a social problem, or, indeed, a person, is not be seen as it, or he or she, appears to our habitual thought, to our predilections and prejudices, to our casual or hasty inspection, but as it really is in itself, in its own terms, in these alone. Objectivity, we might say, is the respect we give to the object as object, as it exists apart from us."[8]

This is not to deny the importance of the "felt response" but merely to assert the equal importance of both reader and text, the importance of seeing as well as feeling.

A CONCLUDING POINT

In an Editorial in the Journal of Higher Education Paul L. Dressel once complained that in statements of educational objectives "there is almost universally an arbitrary and unrealistic separation of cognitive and affective concerns".[9] He went on to demonstrate that the separation is in fact arbitrary and that it has had harmful and limiting effects on discussion about education. It occurs to me that in the Literature Commission we were in some degree afflicted by this separation - response versus analysis, feeling versus knowing, teachers versus academics. Yet at the same time there was a recognition that this kind of division is, in fact, arbitrary and harmful. As I said earlier, one of the key terms to emerge in discussion was "continuity" - continuity in an ongoing exploration of literature, continuity between levels of study and between approaches to literature. Certainly I went away from the Commission with the conviction that there can also be a continuity between emotional and intellectual responses to literature, that these can and should go hand in hand, and that this is, in fact, what must be encouraged in literary studies at tertiary level.

REFERENCES.

1. Harding, D.W. "Response to Literature : Dartmouth seminar report" in Meek, Margaret, Warlow, Aidan and Barton, Griselda, (eds) The Cool Web : The Pattern of Children's Reading. London, Bodley Head, 1977, p.392.
2. Ibid, p.390.
3. Dixon, J. Growth through English, 2nd edition. Oxford University Press, p.8.
4. Alvarez, A. "The Limits of Analysis" in Beyond All This Fiddle. London, Allen Lane, 1968, p.227.
5. Swarsdon, H.R. "The Heritage of the New Criticism", College English, Vol. 41, December 1979, p.414.
6. Wellek, R. and Warren, A. Theory of Literature. New York, Harcourt Brace, 1949, p.7.
7. Whitehead, F. The Disappearing Dais, London, Chatto and Windus, 1968, p.80
8. Trilling, L. Mind in the Modern World. New York, The Viking Press, 1973, pp.33-34.
9. Journal of Higher Education, Vol. XLII, May 1971, p.400.

THE PLAY'S NOT THE THING :

CHARLOTTE'S WEB IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Judith Parker (AUSTRALIA)

> From their earliest years children know what a story is. By the time they are ten they can identify a hero or a heroine, a villian, the archetypal features of comedy and tragedy, the sense of an ending, a verbal joke, the difference between realism and fantasy. They are at home _in_ a book or a story or a T.V. narrative, describing themselves as 'dark listeners'. The language of the story is both what the author wrote and the meta-language by which the readers re-make the tale for themselves, what Culler calls 'the language of plot that is within us'.
>
> (Margaret Meek)

Charlotte's Web is a novel that rarely fails to engage the imagination and feeling of children, and Year 6 at Peak Hill Central School, New South Wales, was no exception. The children were willingly drawn into a fantasy world where a lonely, sometimes stupid pig, Wilbur, is saved by a spider, one Charlotte A. Cavatica. It is her wit and ingenuity that turns Wilbur into a celebrity thereby saving him from ending up as roast pork or a leg of bacon on his owner's table. But _Charlotte's Web_ is more than a gently amusing animal fantasy : it is a story about the cycle of life and death, loneliness and cynical self-interest and the pleasures and pains of friendship.

The children's teacher, Stan Warren, and I knew that we wanted to take the children more deeply into the experience[1] of Charlotte's Web so that they could discover for themselves the truths of human experience embodied in the characters and events of this novel. We knew that we wanted to avoid leaving the novel behind as we sought ways to involve the children more fully and actively in the richness of its patterns. We knew, too, the pit-falls of regarding literature as a body of knowledge which could be taught with Gradgrind-like attention to factual details about plot, theme, characterisation, style and setting. We recognised that this approach denied children the essential value that literature can offer them - an exploration of the world of possibilities and an imaginative framework wherein they can learn about themselves and other human beings.

---

[1] C. & H. Rosen (1973), _The Language of Primary School Children_, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p.195.

Would the children like to make a play of Charlotte's Web and perform it for the Infants' classes of the school? This was our suggestion but they were given the chance to reject the idea or to modify it as they saw fit. We hoped that by giving the children a sense that they were participating in the decision-making process that they would willingly commit themselves to the project. We wanted them to feel that they had chosen to make a play for their purposes, not ours. Too often we involve children in mere time-filling exercises that trap their energies and enthusiasms whereas we ought to be involving them in activities that are meaningful, activities that will enrich and enliven their appreciation and understanding of novels like Charlotte's Web.

The class was divided into seven groups each of which was responsible for re-reading three chapters of the novel (except group seven who had four chapters to re-read). We thought that three chapters ought to take no longer than an hour because the younger children's interest might wane if we tried to make our play longer. This was also a way of ensuring a fairly tight plot where only the essentials of the novel would be dramatised. So, we were beginning to consider the differences between a novel and a play, albeit in a rudimentary manner, and we were considering the importance of dramatic tension in holding an audience's attention.

What information would we have to have from each group if that group was going to produce one scene of the play? The children went off in their small groups to record the information which they decided would answer the question. We felt that it was important for the children to have time to sort through the task for themselves, arguing, discussing, tentatively reaching conclusions about significant aspects of their three chapters. The small group makes it possible for children to engage in real discussions; conversations can be allowed to take their own course, moving back and forth from the text to personal experience and reflection as a way of illuminating both. For the most part, the teacher kept out of the discussions at this stage so that the children were the ones unravelling and exploring the novel for themselves. Margaret Spencer and Geoffrey Summerfield would remind us that children must make the literature their own, taking from it those things which have most to say to them at the time and that imposing literary-critical judgements - our literary-critical judgements - may finally stifle the children's delight in the story.

When we met again as a whole class group, the information the children had collected showed that they were moving away from the mere recording of facts about the story towards offering interpretations and judgements about the events and the characters. Each group presented their findings : we learnt about the characters, their feelings and how they behaved; about important events that occurred and the setting in which they took place, for instance. The children also began to raise problems that they thought we would have to overcome when we began to make the play. How were we going to convey Wilbur's loneliness and his discontent with his boring, daily routine at the Zukerman's farm? Would we have Wilbur say "I'm bored and lonely" or would it be more dramatic to present these feelings through extending the dialogue between Wilbur and the goose? How could the audience learn that when Wilbur first met Charlotte, his pleasure was tempered by his knowledge that there were a number of things about her he did not like? Another group was quick to see that Wilbur's opinion of Charlotte changed as he recognised her concern for him, her sense of loyalty and her ingenuity and that this change must be represented in the play. What were we going to do about the crowd scenes; what stage properties would we need; which characters could we leave out and which ones were essential?

Now that each group had placed before the whole class those aspects of the story which they felt had to be included in their scene in the play, we had to look at each scene carefully from another point of view. How could we develop a play that would hang together and retain the suspense of the original story? The summaries were placed on the wall and we went back into the small group situation to argue out this problem. We were taking one and a half hours a day for English because of other timetable commitments. It was exciting to see that the talk about the play did not stop at the end of the English lesson; the children saw themselves involved in something different and worthwhile and were prepared to devote their energies to it.) We agreed on the composition of the seven scenes although we were aware that modifications might need to be made at some other time during our preparations.

Once we had decided on the composition of each scene and the characters who would be involved, we set about casting the play. So that the children who had been responsible for the planning and the preparation of the various scenes could be part of the drama itself, we used masks for each character. For example, whilst the mask for Wilbur remained the same throughout the play, the role was acted out by different children. Perhaps scene changes were more chaotic than usual but we felt this was more than compensated for by the fact that all children had the opportunity of being actively involved in the task from the initial planning stages through to the actual production of the play before a live audience.

The masks were made from papier maché and each group was responsible for the design and construction of one or two. We spent many lively conversations trying to agree on the expressions each mask would try to capture and precisely how the materials could be used to accomplish this. These kinds of conversations were quite remarkable indicators of the children's depth of understanding about the characters, especially Charlotte, Wilbur, Templeton, Fern and, interestingly, Dr. Dorian. He seems to be only a minor character although he makes profound statements about our need to retain a sense of wonder and awe at the miracles provided daily by the natural world. It may be that the children would have missed Dr. Dorian's thematic importance in Charlotte's Web had they not been looking at the text so closely in attempting to unravel for themselves the meanings of the novel.

When the children first began to write the script for the play they used E.B. White's dialogue almost slavishly. But as they became more familiar with the characters, working out how they would feel and how they would react to various events, they gradually left behind the author's language and drew on their own linguistic resources to express their understandings. The scripts for each scene were discussed by the whole class to see whether the characters were being portrayed consistently. We were pleased that the children felt free to offer suggestions about one another's work. This is not to say, however, that a spirit of ready acceptance of criticism was always apparent but the children were developing a sense of reflecting upon their efforts and evaluating them. When the scenes were finally put together during the dress rehearsals (we only had two) we found the scripts underwent quite drastic changes although, interestingly enough, the dialogue remained in keeping with the character who was being portrayed. Perhaps to use Dorothy Heathcote's words, the children used the language that felt right for them at the time in terms of what they by then know about the character and his reactions.

We used only a few simple properties in the final production of the play. The domestic scenes involving the Arables and the Zuckermans were indicated by a tablecloth thrown over a school desk; the fair ground by a few balloons. We used a back-drop of Charlotte's Web made from a large sheet of butcher's paper on which a web was drawn in heavy black texta colour. The words Charlotte spun that made Wilbur a celebrity were attached to the web during the appropriate scenes.

Letters were written to the teachers and children in the Infants' School and their parents as well as the parents of the Year 6 children, inviting them to the performance of the play. How much easier it was to talk about the need for correct spelling and punctuation when the letters were being written for the children's purposes to a real audience. In encouraging the children to make a play of Charlotte's Web we were primarily concerned "to take them more deeply into the experience" of the novel but we also hoped we would be providing them with opportunities to use their language for a variety of purposes in a variety of situations. We wanted to avoid the traditional pattern of the teacher asking all the questions to which the answers were already known. We wanted the children to seek answers to questions that they had asked and to take responsibility for the direction of their own learning.

Now, the play's not the thing and Charlotte's Web as theatre was not a polished production. Scene changes were less than smooth and the time between scenes was often far too long whilst the children fumbled to get their masks on straight. Perhaps we could have used some music to fill in the awkward silences and maybe we needed someone to link the scenes together more coherently. The children sometimes over-acted, forgot their lines and Charlotte had trouble attaching her words to the web. But we were less interested in the final product than we were in the process which seemed to help them enter more fully into the emotional richness and complexity of the novel, to express their responses creatively and imaginatively and to share their insights and enjoyment with other children.

In the final scene of the play Charlotte tells Wilbur that she had helped him because he was her friend :

> "You have been my friend .... That in itself is a tremendous thing. I wove my webs for you because I liked you. After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die. A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heavens knows anyone's life can stand a little of that."
>
> (p.157, Penguin edition)

The child taking the role of Charlotte managed to capture the pathos of the moment movingly but unsentimentally and the audience glimpsed something of the power of literature.

RESPONDING TO POETRY

John Allen (AUSTRALIA) **and**
Michael Angelotti (UNITED STATES)

> Do we then need a new 'map' of literature, much more sensitive to the peculiar contours and local features of that strange place called adolescence? Or is it, rather, that we need better, cannier, subtler ways of getting adolescents to a point where they themselves can begin adequately to assimilate and accommodate to the meanings of 'adult' texts?
>
> (Geoff Summerfield)

As part of our work with the literature commission, our subgroup was asked to respond, cold turkey, to Howard Nemerov's "The Companions" and Ted Hughes' "February". Our first task was to decide which one first. After a quick scan we elected Nemerov because that poem looked more accessible to quick response (it begins "There used to be gods in everything, and now they've gone", the mythological allusion seemed an appropriate metaphor for our times). Hughes' poem looked impregnable ("The wolf with its belly stitched full of big pebbles; / Nibelung wolves barbed like a black pineforest / Against a red sky, over blue snow; or that long grin / Above the tucked coverlet-none suffice"). The rest of the group thought the same way; although after analysis, we agreed that "The Companions" was rather shallow and poorly written, whereas "February", more difficult to penetrate at first, was rich with meaning and more satisfying to read. Responding to these poems was frustrating as there was so little time for private interpretation, and we both find that we are not very good at spontaneous public response to literature. Discussion revealed that the rest of the group felt the same.

The point of this exercise was to examine our own processes of reading and responding to poetry as a way to clarify what we are attempting to achieve in literature classes. The conclusions that we drew were rather obvious ones :

1. Reading and responding are interlocking processes.
2. Reading involves readability, reading abilities, motivation and environmental pressures, that is, it is an interior and

exterior act. The object of reading a poem is to experience it. People read poems differently, experience them differently, and respond to them differently.

3. Responding may be to substance, form, or both and may take any number of emotional and intellectual forms - some immediate, others delayed. It is almost always negative and minimal in forced situations or where lack of knowledge prevails.

4. We ignore most of what we know (no matter how obvious) about reading and responding when we teach literature, an act too much governed by content coverage and arbitrary selection of class materials.

Although a group of English teachers is not a heterogeneous class of teenagers, and given that parallels in poetry reading behaviour between teachers and students are easily strained, conclusions one, two and three seem to be generalizable to adolescent readers of poetry. Four to teachers only.

Readability, for example, encompasses such factors as syntax, vocabulary, figurative language, poetic form, historical nuance, and subject matter. Reading abilities not only include appropriate linguistic, poetic and contentive knowledge but also strategies for gaining a literal sense of the poem and reasonable interpretations at various levels of meaning.

Being able to read a poem, of course, is not quite enough. One must be motivated to do so. The more such motivation comes from within, the more likely that comprehension barriers will be overcome by students themselves as a natural consequence of striving to understand. Critical to intrinsic motivation (particularly with adolescents) are interest in subject matter, immediate payoff (pleasure and/or insight), some degree of choice, success, and an honest ear (teacher or peers who care about what they have to say). To "experience" a poem, then, one must be motivated to read it and be able to do so once there. The level and nature of response very much depends on the quality of experiencing the poem. If teaching poetry involves bringing students to experience poetry and to respond to it in some public way, then teaching poetry is, quite clearly, a very tall order. But, it can be done.

In his recent book English Teaching Since 1965. How Much Growth? (Heinemann, 1980) David Allen writes that "English teaching in practice is like a manuscript used over and over with each new layer only obliterating part of the old one". The teaching strategy that we present here offers little that is new; much of it is a re-statement of some of the well-worn pages of that manuscript. It aims at taking the reader into the classrooms of two practicing teachers - classrooms as far apart as Melbourne, Australia and Texas, U.S.A. - who believe that the development of a poetic consciousness is a profoundly important part of a person's growth in language and in their perceptions.

Beginning close to the language, times and substance of adolescent life, especially for inexperienced or reluctant poetry readers, is old but good advice. In terms of reading theory, we suggest that we begin with something like a language experience approach (see the work of Roach Van Allen) that goes heavily into student talk, writing from that talk, and responding to what has been written. From there, and integrated with student writing we ease into more standard poetry. Here is a poem, for example, written by a former seventh grade student in response to an assignment to write of something in his life, however ordinary, that he found interesting :

An Old Black Couple I Know

She just sits
on her old wooden Porch
Smoking her Pipe
with cheap tobacco in it.
Her blind husband
just lays on the bed.
His fever high
not long before he will die.
Both very old
live off of well fair
They do allright
while summer is here.
But winter comes by and
Children come and help with the work.
To keep the spirits
out of the house,
There are the horseshoes
on the front porch.
One day they will die.
Then there will be
many good memories.
Memories remembered of
when they were still Alive.
It will be a sad day when they die.

Barry Shields.

Not perfect, but honest. Barry used to buy bait from the old couple and totally captivated by the class with his observations of them during his discussion of the poem, which, incidentally, appeared in the May 1977 issue of The English Journal, 66. Barry demonstrated to the class that the content of poetry is everywhere in their lives and that everyone can frame experience within at least the semblance of a poem. "All of us are poets", writes John Fowles, "but only some express themselves in words". It was not difficult to slip Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son" and Elizabeth Bishop's "The Fish" into the conversation.

Some poems, like Barry's open the way to lively class discussions. Sharing such a poem is like sitting around a faded sepia photograph, talking about the details of the scene, the expressive faces created, listening to similar stories from the group. Other poems are "converstion stoppers" (as one student so aptly put it) where the reader, conscious of this privilege afforded him, walks hesitantly into the private world of the poet. Consider Johan's "My Room, My Symptom" :

My room, my mansion.
Once glowed with warmth,
Laughter and security.
Now its cold walls
house ugly memories.
Its ceiling casts two hollow expressions :
repugnance and despair.

It is impossible to read that poem without asserting a faint tremor into the voice. It was written, in Hal Porter's words "from the ink of the heart", by a fourteen year old who had met with little success in his studies, especially in English. In reply to a question from a fellow student Johan mentioned that the idea for the poem (the first poem he had ever attempted) came to him as he was riding along on his bike. Writing the poem - and that meant working on the language for over a week, writing and re-writing - gave him the opportunity to make sense of his experience, to "think things through on paper". Johan's experience affirms the truth of C. Day Lewis' statement that "we write not in order to be understood, but in order to understand".

Discussion of popular song lyrics has led to some interesting classes. Students seem to be more interested in what makes a song a song rather than a poem. While discussing "Curtains" (Captain Fantastic, MCA 1975), for example, we noted that it was not complete without the musical arrangement and artist's style. That is, a peronal meaning of the song required its total environment. But, it was not necessary to literally comprehend either lyric or arrangement (intended meaning or form) to enjoy the song, although we suspect that those songs that last the longest have the more meaningful lyrics. Witness the continued popularity of Don McLean's "Vincent", Simon and Garfunkel's lyrics, the ballads of Joan Baez. The Australian folksinger Eric Bogle has much to offer with songs like "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda". If one of our aims as English teachers is to help students develop a critical consciousness a strong case can be made for bringing some of the best and the very worst song lyrics (and poems?) into class for discussion and they can be judged purely as exercises in language and/or within the context of the song. A lively class is assured!

A poem is usually more complex and verbally complete than a song lyric. It requires much more of the reader's experiential background in form and meaning to complete its environment as well as a striving for reasonable literal comprehension and likely interpretations of figurative language. As a result, the meaning of a poem, once achieved, is more truly individualised to the reader.

Another technique that draws on student language resources is a collaborative writing approach. We have both brought our own unfinished poems to a class as a problem to be solved or they have made their own writing (problems) public by presenting them on overhead transparencies or on the blackboard and inviting all of us to respond, to participate in their creative processes. Much learning about poetry takes place as we consider possible titles, or argue the most appropriate word, or whether or not to delete a line or image. Removing bits of established poems had a similar effect, although we are not always convinced that the poet's choices were necessarily better than our own.

I.V. Hansen's Young People Writing (1971) presents tasks which are demanding for the teacher as well as the student. The class poem is one such activity. Here the teacher acts as blackboard scribbler, sifter of ideas and editor as the whole class joins together in writing a poem. At the start of an English period with fourteen year olds one student suggested that we write about a highly visual experience known to all : the city on a wet night. Another wished to write about time. We settled on the former topic, but inadvertently the two subjects fused together. After four forty minute periods of wrestling with words the disjointed lines on the blackboard were transmuted into this small poem :

MELBOURNE

The beat of the wipers revealed the city maze.
Buildings, rising into a haze of mist,
Embroidered the city.

An ambulance glaringly wailed as it
Weaved through a blur of cars.
Bent over people shuffled by, their blank faces
lit by the lashing streaks of neon lights,
Their lives synchronized by an audience of clocks
Keeping watch upon the city.

IIIA (April 1976)

A series of photographs of a fire produced the following response from the same class :

Fire fire! Fire fire!

   I watched the fire
Engulf a building.
Orange tongues of hissing, writhing heat
Whipped the crisp plastered walls.
   I stared frightened, fascinated, yet
   Secure on the opposite corner.
Windows burst. Chimneys, tiles, bricks
And steel showered the street,
Spewing smoke and glittering sparks.
   A fire engine belled past
   Then we were moved on.

It is, of course, the articulate and confident members of the class who make the principal contributions, yet it is surprising how the more reticent can contribute in their own way, suggesting a longer pause by changing a comma to a semi-colon, or offering a title. When the poem is typed and duplicated each can take home a work of art they shared in making.

If one expects students to be fully engaged in the process of writing in the classroom then a creative and stimulating environment must be created. So many classrooms are soulless. The English room should be a picture palace of photographs, prints, poems, proverbs, graffiti where one can, as W.H. Auden describes it "enjoy hanging around words, listening to what they say".

The photograph in the writing workshop (a transformed classroom) pictured a gravestone about the size of a shoebox. The grave was unkept, overgrown and distinguished only be the scribbly printing of "Baby Fenton" painted across the stone. Roland's response was as sparse and equally as powerful as the photograph.

TOMBSTONE

Baby Fenton, once loved;
Now forgotten and left with the flowers.
Reaching out above the celebrating crowd;
An audience of shuddering flowers.
Nature's big show of time.

With most of the talk at the Sydney Conference taking place at a theory level, it was refreshing to listen to a lecture by Professor J.R. Cameron from the University of Calgary, titled "Literature as Public Performance". In order to encourage response to poetry from another direction Cameron had his students create line drawings and animations of poems. These were photographed and processed into coloured slides. A reading of the poem (with accompanying music and sound) was tape recorded by the students to then be played "as public performance" with the corresponding slides. The results we saw were marvellous - lively and imaginative re-creations of the world of the poem created, as Cameron mentioned, by students who were having difficulty with language, especially poetry appreciation. The slides are just for beginners, one (or other groups) can then go to the more linear medium of film and television. And where does our visual imagination take us here? Back to the world of Norman MacLaren, perhaps?

Responding to popular film and fiction (the more bizarre the better) makes provocative content for student poems. Can you imagine poetic responses to Poe's The Black Cat, JAWS or "10"? Here is a poem written by an Australian student, published in Friday Writing by Devonport High School, Tasmania, that could be reactions to JAWS :

The Shark

Silently, as graceful as can be
He slides through the water,
His eyes are fixed on me.

Slowly, down goes the fin
the air is filled with screams,
I can sense him closing in.

Suddenly, I stiffen
He's right under me
I see the white streak glisten

As he passes me by.

A parody of Coleridge's Kubla Khan found (among others in the March 1976 Mad comics) begins like this :

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree
With marble bathtubs in each john
and evr'y room a great salon
To please his family.

What better way to get into form than through parody and imitations of parodies read? (What are the possibilities for teaching satire from Saturday Night Live?)

Relaxation exercises are an effective way of beginning Drama sessions. The rush of the day can be put aside as the class members temporarily forget about their interactions with one another and the hectic world of the school, focus on their own awareness and experience the stillness and the quietude that comes from the meditative experience. Such exercises, loosely based on the principles of Hatha Yoga, not only clear the mind but also allow a concentrated focus on a particular feeling or idea. After the meditation had been going for some time a group of

Year 7 students (twelve and thirteen year olds) were asked to think of a spider spinning its web, to imagine the pattern of its movements, to see it sitting in its corner awaiting its prey. Slowly the teacher suggested different fragments of the world of the spider to the class who then came to their feet to act out the scene. Phillip asked if he could temporarily leave the group wishing to write rather than act his created responses to the suggestions. The result was this poem :

THE TRAP

The spider laboured constantly, untiringly,
As the cartwheel web began to take shape.
Its abdomen hard at work producing gossamer
As it sailed through the air deftly clinging
To a blade of wet grass.
It tied and glued the final threads,
Then stalked back into the cool shelter of a leaf
Awaiting the fate of a passing insect.

Our educational systems - indeed, Western Societies - do little to encourage the contemplative; so often stillness is equated with indolence, quietude with laziness. In one of her lectures at the Sydney Conference Margaret Meek mentioned that the only time students have any experience of the contemplative is in bed! The meditative process should be seen not only as an integral part of Drama classes but of writing sessions as well. It was interesting to hear James Moffatt exploring similar concerns in his paper entitled "New Trends in Writing" delivered at the Conference. We look forward to his new book on Meditation and Writing which is soon to be published.

One thing that all the poems and approaches mentioned have in common is an emphasis on poetic expression closer to contemporary speech than to the literary language of much traditional poetry. This is not to suggest that traditional poetry is to be abandoned, but rather to point out that response is the key to a successful poetry class, and to respond one must understand. When students are inexperienced poetry readers, they are more likely to respond to meaningful poetry in familiar language than to meaningful poetry in literary language. They also tend to read and respond to traditional poetry better if they have had prior success with similar forms written in familiar language. The contemporary and the traditional, however, must be fused if a full and accurate view of "poetry" is to be developed.

Finding adolescent poetry "written in familiar language" is another matter. The sources that we have used in this article suggest that there is no generic adolescent poetry (written for and about adolescents by professional writers) as there is an adolescent or young adult novel. This is true. For better or for worse, we are forced to scramble for class materials beyond what is available in grade level anthologies. The popular song lyric would come closest to poetry written for adolescents, although one would have to be terribly selective among those. There have been, in fact, occasional collections of song lyrics published with the adolescent audience in mind, such as McGraw-Hill's Always Begin Where You Are. In it, Walter Lamb arranges contemporary song lyrics and poetry thematically. Stephen Dunning, Edward Leuders and Hugh Smith's Reflections on the Gift of a Watermelon Pickle (SF, 1966) and Some Haystacks Don't Have Any Needles (SF, 1969) still remain as anthologies of poetry most sensitive to the general adolescent audience. In the Australian context the Kaleidoscope series edited by David Mallick and Rhodri Jones offer a wide selection of challenging poems ordered around arbitrary themes. The poems are complemented by Michael Fitzjames' beautiful line drawings. Other sourses of adolescent poetry outside the classroom itself are anthologies of poems written for children, recent May issues of The English Journal and collected student writing - although your school literary magazine is as good a source as any other. The May 1979 English Journal, in fact, contains an article specifically directed to "the publication of students' literary writings".

As evidenced by issue upon issue of The English Journal and the various NCTE affiliate publications, the most promising continuing source of technique in teaching poetry to adolescents is the secondary classroom teacher. Dunning's work on teaching poetry in Literature for Adolescents (SF, 1975) is still the most helpful (practical) commercial guide that we have found on the subject. In it, for example, he discusses eight principles for teaching poetry which emphasize that teachers should themselves be enthusiastic readers of poetry and should keep experience with poetry at the centre of their teaching. Michael True, in an English Journal article (May 1980, 42), agrees with Dunning but also points to "the necessity of reading poems aloud" as the prime element in experiencing poetry. To a correspondent who once criticized the rhythms of his poetry, D.H. Lawrence replied : "If your ear has got stiff and a bit mechanical, don't blame my poetry". And he explained : "It all depends on the pause - the natural lingering pause, the natural lingering of the voice according to the feeling - it is the hidden emotional pattern that makes poetry, not its obvious form". Lawrence's statement could well be inscribed on a wall chart in the classroom. It seems to us a marvellous direction in being told how to read a poem.

Amongst the Australian publications I.V. Hansen's Young People Writing (1971) and The Water and The Wave (1979) stand as seminal works for the English teacher.

Of course, there is a good bit of personal philosophy underlying anyone's approach to teaching poetry. We are no different. We believe that you learn to appreciate poetry by experiencing as much poetry of as many varieties at as many levels as possible. The focus is on poems, and you learn to sense poetry out of that. You need the first experience of revelation - a meaning discovered that wasn't there before, that you uncover for yourself and then find out to be true. Then you become hooked on poetry reading. You need the first bit of satisfaction in writing a poem, and the first bit of praise (that you believe) from someone else, and you are hooked on poetry writing. It probably takes the continuous interaction of writing, reading, speaking and listening to poetry to develop a poetic consciousness - that particular perception that allows writer and reader to derive meaning from experience, to sense significance and to communicate in poetic form.

Poetic consciousness is nothing more than intuition applied to poetry. Some people learn to be intuitive as a natural consequence of growing up and easily read and respond to poetry with depth. Others need to be taught and can develop a poetic intuition through immersion in appropriate poetry and inductive teaching of poetic form and meaning. Teaching poetry must be directed to helping students develop a poetic consciousness.

Finally, it is the absence of poetic consciousness that causes many people to read and write poetry superficially. They never quite penetrate the surface, missing the intelligence behind the poem, reading as though the poem were speaking to no intelligence at all. J.C. Squire tells of a cabin boy who accompanied the Ancient Mariner on his voyage. Questioned on return, he said that there was a lot of ice about, but later on they couldn't get enough to drink.

The nature and quality of response very much depends upon the student's engagement with the poem. We hope that some of the activities and approaches suggested here may help us toward having a class like Seamus Heaney's where :

> "... Pencils are chewed, tongues mime
> Their blundering embrace of the free
>
> Word. A silence charged with sweetness
> Breaks short on lost faces where I see
> New looks. Then notes stretch taut as snares. They trip
> To fall into themselves unknowingly."

PART 3 :

FOUR DIFFERENT EMPHASES

STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH TEACHING :
WHICH LEG FIRST?

Ian Hansen (AUSTRALIA)

We have now seen some teachers at their task. We have caught glimpses of Year 6 primary school children working up a dramatic presentation of Charlotte's Web and middle years secondary pupils being confronted by Shakespeare and by the theme of death; we have listened in while teachers at the tertiary level reflect upon what they are doing or feel they ought to be doing.

When Boswell once asked the great lexicographer what children should learn first, Dr. Johnson replied

> "... there is no matter what children should learn first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your backside is bare."

There are still uncomfortable draughts in the classrooms, and we must at least minimise their occurrence. Certainly we have grounds for thinking it is important that children and young people should learn certain things first. There is a sequence in which things should be introduced: we begin from what our pupils know best. This assumes, however, that children do know best what they think they know, and such an assumption has led to what Basil Bernstein has called 'the theologising of the child'.

Certainly from the early 1950's, when I began teaching English, there was a need to place the child centrally. I first taught as I had been taught, for ours is a conservative profession. I taught as my colleagues taught. Our classes 'knew' Kidnapped, for example, knew the order and magnitude of every movement during the Siege of the round house: our young 'readers' could say with absolute certainty where the skylight was in relation to the locker and the open door. And we taught at another level: we played endlessly the game of 'guess-what's-in-my-mind'. We were not really interested in what was in our pupils' minds. But many of us were beginning to feel uneasy about this procedure. We began to talk sotto voce in quiet corners of our staffrooms of how pupils thought and felt about what they were 'reading'. In a sense, though we did not realise it, we were waiting for Dartmouth. As it were, looking over our shoulders to make sure no one was watching, we rather gingerly offered opportunities for our pupils to write poems (haiku and tanka, I seem to remember: form was important to us) and to fabricate stories and we began to ask if our classes enjoyed what they were reading from the school library. The child's position was being shifted from the periphery of the classroom to the centre.

By the late 1960's we were much relieved, or so we felt at the time. Beginning where the child was became our unashamed strategy.
John Dixon's growth model was establishing itself as wisdom. But a re-reading of the Dartmouth papers revealed at least a kind of uncertainty. For language in operation played a major role and literature and reading were assigned ancillary roles. Centering the child, 'theologizing the

child', made a great difference, as it turned out, to our view of the place of literature. The Dartmouth Seminar had set up a study group to examine the issue of ~~literary response:~~ a paper featured in the group's proceedings came from James Britton. In this paper, Britton offered what he called, 'an unorthodox way of defining literature', a definition based on the idea of language in the spectator role. Literature is a particular kind of utterance, constructed not for 'use' but for the writer's own satisfaction. From this it follows that 'what a child writes is of the same order as what the poet or novelist writes and is valid for the same reasons. 1.

Given certain constraints, no one, I think, would quarrel with the logic of this position. Yet given the loss of nerve of embattled teachers in ill-ordered classrooms, it is not surprising that child-centredness has meant a decline from professionalism to amateurism in writing; from professionalism to amateurism in literature. There has been through the 1970's an English-speaking-worldwide recession: the pound, the dollar, the rand of our programmes' currency have been successively devalued and linguistic and literary inflation has been running into at least double figures.

Consider, for example, the fragmentation of the Sydney conference; the commission outlines were like checklists of burning issues: 'language in relation to the whole curriculum', 'bilingual education', 'priorities in teacher education', 'the lay voice in the governance and curriculum of schools', 'what does failure mean?', 'language for personal growth', 'writing as a significant aspect of language development', 'the nature of narrative', 'English teaching and research'. Which leg first?

Helpfully, David Allen's fine English Teaching Since 1965 2. came on sale at the time of the conference. If ever a justification of Allen's position in that book were demanded, it was to be found among the often wild and whirling words (my lord) that echoed around the campus of the University of Sydney. There are still at the opening of the 1980's factions at war, for all the vehement denials that may be made by either side: Mafia are to be discerned within the profession. Polarisation is distressingly wasteful. Allen calls for the tempering of

> "excessive, partial claims and the dominance of what is only one aspect of English. No advocates of literature or language have ever demanded the exclusion of the other, yet amidst the acerbic claims and counter-claims, it has been difficult for the English teacher to maintain balance." 3.

It may be held that some of the theoretical distinctions which gave rise to 'acerbic claims' have by now merged into less hostile terrain, the valleys gentler, the hills not so precipitous. For example, many teachers have let their traveller's eyes swing from the cultural heritage model to the growth model and back again, the while wondering why they are being offered a choice of route. What seems to me to be the current situation is that there is no longer a meaningful distinction to be made between those two models, and for the simple reason that the world is a different place from what it was in the 1960's. The necessity for sloganeering is gone. The profession has internalised and resolved the factious concepts. The very word 'heritage' has taken on new and commendatory meanings. There is a fresh awareness in North America and in the Southern continents and islands of a received culture, a roots phenomenon that says that at our peril we deny our past, without which there is no present or future. The word 'personal' has also taken on new meanings: it no longer denotes simply an inward looking, but in addition a recognition of a network of relationships both with others and with the Other. Plus ça change.

Given that things can be no longer what they were and assuming that part of our preparation as teachers is recognising that fact, we need to explore now, at this slow turning of the decade, what a phrase such as 'teachers mediating' may mean. There are insights for us in Kieran Egan's Educational Development. 4. Egan affects to trace four stages in education. (He has the good grace, in his introduction, to comment upon the similarities between his schema and A.F. Whitehead's 'rhythm of education', while claiming to have formulated his stages before having his attention drawn to Whitehead). The stages, with approximate age-levels, are 1. the mythic stage, ages 4/5 - 9/10, 2. the romantic stage, ages 8/9 - 14/15, 3. the philosophic stage, ages 14/15 - 19/20 and 4. the ironic stage, ages 19/20 - adulthood.

Very briefly, the mythic stage is one of intellectual security. Nothing changes: the young child's mental life charges the world with meaning from within. His view of that world tends to be articulated on binary opposites: people and things are good or bad, beautiful or ugly. At the romantic stage, the child develops a rudimentary but serviceable concept of otherness: he begins to cope with notions of time, space and causality. The world is seen as separate and fundamentally different from the child, it is newly perceived as alien. He therefore deifies himself, as a first security within this world of alien reality. He becomes a sentimentalist, and is suddenly fascinated by the extremes of what exists and what is known: he becomes obsessed with detail.

It is the philosophic stage that, in Egan's explication, reminds us of one of our crucial responsibilities. The child, the pupil at this stage (from Year 9 onwards in the secondary school) realises that he is largely determined by his place in the world: he no longer has transcendance over it. He tries to reduce the world to manageable proportions, he becomes engrossed in general propositions like society and culture and develops hierarchies (the best film, the second-best), often imposing single-criterion hierarchies where multiple-criteria should be applied. That is, beginning with scant concern for reality (the mythic stage), he attempts next to establish boundaries and the extent of reality (the romantic stage) and now tries to map general features in terms of very general organising grids. And here is the point for teachers of English: he wants to find out about the world for his own sake, to establish his own identity. Egan calls this sub-stage narcissistic. To be sure, in this sense the two earlier stages subsume narcissism, but here it is at its most acute and evident. This narcissism takes the form of concern for knowledge because of what it tells about oneself. 5.

The teacher as mediator has the sometimes awesome task of transmuting knowledge or transmuting text into at least a kind of knowledge that pupils find self-revelatory. We shall see later in this section teachers engaged in this process as they lead classes into and through I Spy. We must dismiss from our minds preconceptions of narcissism as, simplistically, self-indulgence, and accept it as a developmental element in our pupils' growth.

And I turn to a facet of the context of that growth. Who could have told, for example, at the time of Dartmouth (which seems 'like ancient rather than recent history' 6.), just how pervasive mass media and television in particular would be in the lives of people? The futurists were only beginning to collect their material: Alvin Toffler's blockbusting Future Shock would not appear until 1970. Now, ten years on, we are used to hearing jeremiads about the dehumanising effect of mass media.

Concerned educators fulminate against the superficially purveyed by press, radio and television. Christine Higgins, in an earlier paper in this book, has again added her voice to those that would alert us to the dangers about us. She reminds us of the potent myth-making of television and the fictionalising and trivialising of talk-back radio. 7. I wish at this point to provide a gloss of her argument.

In a little known and hence sadly neglected monograph, 8. published in 1975, Fred and Merrelyn Emery explore the nature of human communication and the media. They make certain alarming observations regarding television. For example, the constant visual signal of fifty half-frames per second has the same effect upon the prefrontal lobes of the brain as disease or trauma. Loss or impairments of functioning of prefrontal lobes means that the individual loses most of the information required for the solving of any problem of complexity. A San Francisco survey of 1971 involved telephoning viewers directly after the evening news bulletin; the survey revealed that more than half of those who had watched could not remember a single item in the bulletin. That is, capacity to make judgements on or even remember television programmes is damped down by the signal itself. Electroencephalographs demonstrate that brain activity measured while a subject is watching television shows a pattern almost identical with the brain activity when a subject is in a state of drowsiness before sleep. The Emerys' hypothesise that a long term consequence of regular television viewing may be dream deprivation: they claim that television distorts the dream cycle, with a corresponding lack in regular viewers of unique personal vitality. With the prefrontal lobes temporarily not functioning, the more primitive areas of the brain are in the ascendency; therefore television is useful for the output of information, but far less than adequate in providing opportunities for valuing. So the catalogue extends. And the authors observe:

> "For a very large part of the next thirty years we will have to cope with the dragon's teeth already sown. Our concern will not be with what new technologies might do but with what they have already done." 9.

Teachers see around them young people whose grip on reality is weak and trembling. Fact through the medium of television becomes fiction, and fiction, fact. That bastard word 'faction' so clearly enunciates in its awkwardness and lack of euphony the dilemma they face, both teachers and taught. The position I wish to make clear is that we do not know enough about mass media generally and television in particular. Firm evidence lacking, we do right to be disturbed - better such unease than an uncritical acceptance. We do well to suspect that if the philosophic stage adolescent wants to establish his identity by finding out about the world for his own sake, then our task as mediators is a difficult one.

Our background as teachers includes experience of the process of literary criticism. We have, most of us, come to espouse the New Criticism, as practised by Richards and Leavis among others. We know this view is characterised by an ontological autonomy bound to at least a degree on an initial spontaneous response to the work being studied. We are not prepared to state or even imply that a literary text, for example, has one meaning only or that every meaning is accessible. As E.D. Hirsch 10. sees it, criticism (and we must be sure what we mean by that) is a two-fold process, embodying 'meaning' and 'significance'

> "'Meaning'(he says) is that which is represented by the text; it is what the author meant by his particular use of sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. 'Significance', on the other hand, means a relationship

> between a meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable. Authors, who like everyone else change their attitudes, feelings, opinions and value criteria in the course of time will obviously in the course of time tend to view their own work in different contexts. Clearly what changes for them is not the meaning of the work, but rather their personal relationship to that meaning." 11.

Meaning is 'an affair of consciousness', not of 'self-consciousness'. Further,

> "...no text is ever fully explicated... But the probability of the interpreter's inference may be judged by two criteria alone - the accuracy with which he has sensed the horizon of the whole and the typicality of such a meaning within such a whole." 12.

Therefore Hirsch continues, it is not possible to produce criteria for infallible literary criticism, but any evidence, intrinsic or extrinsic to the literary work, will provide legitimate commentary. In sum, criticism embodies meaning and significance together.

This seems to be to be a useful point from which to explore the way school-pupils may perceive literature. A study has been made of the language behaviours of small groups of thirteen year olds in undirected learning situations. 13. From each of six secondary schools, representative of six points across the socio-economic spectrum, six pupils were chosen by their regular English teachers to participate in the investigation. Each group of six pupils was given the privacy of a small room. The pupils were provided with a cassette recorder and an 'unseen' poem to discuss. They were given no instructions concerning the way they should approach the poem; they were merely asked to 'talk about it'. All the groups followed a programme of ten poems, discussed at roughly ten-day intervals. The audio tapes of the discussions were transcribed and the transcripts analysed; the analytical scheme was specifically devised for this study and examined the proportion of kinds of utterance across five categories.

The findings of the utterance-analysis need not detain us. What is interesting for our present purposes is the differential performances of the groups. Both length and quality of discussions varied. Regarding length, for example, the total number of utterances concerning a particular poem ranged from twenty-nine to 444. Regarding quality of discussion, some groups were characterised by such utterances as 'What a weird poem' and others by such utterances as 'It's a drifty poem about thoughts ... just a few thoughts ... it's a feeling poem'.

The attempt to explain success and failure was made through three stages. Firstly, it was considered that ineffectual discussion was a function of lack of self-esteem; certain pupils did not have sufficient confidence either in their capacity or experience to approach the poems. It was felt that in itself this could not be seen as explaining failure fully. Secondly, it was believed that the social composition of the groups militated against successful discussion. While the application of a social psychological measure 14. suggested this was certainly a major factor, it was nevertheless considered that some further element was also important. Thirdly, then, it was proposed that the success or otherwise of the group discussions depended on whether the individual members of the group were able meaningfully to perceive the poems. Individual utterances in the transcripts suggested that literary perception depends upon two concomitants, perception of generalisation and perception of analogy.

The comprehension of, in this case, a poem requires abilities which may be fruitfully thought of as being akin to spatial perception. The ability seems to be a threshold phenomenon: just as a pupil may at a moment 'see' for the first time a solid figure in geometry, that is, perceive the space of it, so a pupil may 'see' a poem. This idea must be regarded as tentative but it is at least potentially useful. That provocative Leavis phrase, to "enter into possession of the given poem" 15. isuseful to us. As an avid listener to music, I had been rationally aware that Vivaldi's work has about it the spirit of Venice; critics and commentators had told me that the music has the colour and movement of Venice. I assented to this. Then one evening, as I listened to a performance of the concerto for four violins in B minor, I suddenly, having stepped over a threshold, as it were, 'saw' in the opening bars the shimmer of sunlight on water, 'saw', indeed, a little canal behind the Piazza San Marco twinkling and flashing; I had come to 'possess' the music. Knowing about had become knowing. So it is very often with 'seeing' or perceiving a poem.

It is important to distinguish two types of perceptual ability. Firstly, when a poem is built upon an analogy, comprehension of the poem requires that the parts of the analogy be brought together in the mind at the time of reading as in an act of visual perception. One may be able to perceive the gunsight, as it were, and be able to perceive the target, but a successful shot requires the simultaneous perception of both in a particular juxtaposition. This phenomenon we may call perception of analogy.

The second ability is less specific and depends upon the manipulation of spatial relations between the reader and his life and the subject of the poem. The reader must see that a narrative poem, for example, while describing a particular incident or sequence of incidents is at the same time presenting a general thought of or response to all such incidents. Fully to appreciate the poem, the reader must see it in terms of all similar incidents in his own life, must understand that many of the details of the poem are irrelevant to the theme. This phenomenon we may call perception of generalisation.

It appears that as pupils grow in their comprehension of poems, a specific order of acquisition of these two abilities is likely. From the study described above it is clear that the groups of pupils who were able to perceive the analogies of poems had no difficulties in generalising from the poems; on the other hand, however, groups who had difficulty in perceiving generalisations were quite incapable of perceiving (complex) analogies. Thus it would seem that perception of generalisation is acquired before perception of analogy. This may at first seem a counter-intuitive claim to make, since perceiving analogy seems less complex than perceiving generalisation. However, it should be remembered that any noun, for example, is a generalisation and the ability to understand a poem which depends upon generalisation may be seen as an extension of the ability to understand a word. The philosophic stage adolescent is, as we have seen, mapping general features.

These perceptual abilities may be illustrated by the common experience of young children and even adults mistaking films and certain television programmes for reality. Young children and adolescents must acquire the ability to maintain a sense of reality while watching film or television; they must learn to place such media presentations in a proper perspective. Being able to do this is necessary for the eventual acquisition of a full critical perspective. That is, it is being able to respond to film (or, in our later case, Graham Green's I Spy) in the full context of one's own life and then to place it and evaluate it in a cultural context.

But, as Geoffrey Summerfield observes in a paper earlier in this collection,

> "Our pupils ... too often sit while the teacher, as master-reader, as master-critic, shows how much he knows; displays the sharper edges of his critical teeth; explains the 'meaning'; sets up, wittingly or otherwise, the notion that literature (and especially poetry) never lays its cards on the table, is always hiding its 'real' meaning, which the master-reader must disinter so as to hold up the bones for the pupils' inspection." 16.

'Significance', as Hirsch puts it, that 'relationship between a meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable', 17. is never a part of Summerfield's grave-robber's way of doing things.

Yet what significances are possible? One of the themes running through the essays of George Steiner is whether literature-study does in fact educate towards humane action: Steiner cannot quite rid himself of the picture of the men who devised and administered Auschwitz continuing to read their Shakespeare and Goethe. Such harsh evidence

> "...means that whoever teaches or interprets literature - and both are exercises seeking to build for the writer a body of living, discerning response - must ask of himself what he is about (to tutor, to guide someone through Lear or the Oresteia is to take into one's hand the springs of his being). Assumptions regarding the value of literate culture to the moral perception of the individual and society were self-evident to Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold. They are now in doubt. We must countenance the possibility that the study and transmission of literature may be of only marginal significance, a passionate luxury like the preservation of the antique. Or, at worst, that it may detract from more urgent and responsible uses of time and energy of spirit. I do not believe either to be true. But the question must be asked and explored without cant. 18.

Nor do I believe either to be true. Ask the question, certainly; such questioning gives a useful perspective. But to mediate the exploration of the world through literature is, in my view, a most urgent and responsible use of time and energy of spirit. We must not only mean but also signify.

My contact with both education students and practising teachers (and, to be honest, I must add my own on-going classroom experience of twelve to fourteen-year olds in schools) causes me to wonder how often we reflect upon what we do with our pupils. I mean, how do we go about things? Have we thrown away all that we once learned about what we dismissively called 'theory'? To take one example: an essential part of our work in schools and in tertiary institutions is to encourage reading. However, we are often frustrated because individuals in our classes cannot read. The sign sequences are coped with, possibly, but understanding is at least vague and tenuous, if not non-existent. Reading comprehension is doubtful at best. We get annoyed: 'What do you mean, you don't understand that bit'? Have we forgotten, did we never know the common sense of usefulness of the Barrett taxonomy of reading comprehension? 19. We demand from our pupils in schools evaluative and appreciative responses to a text, without first checking that inferential comprehension has been made: that is, in the terms of this paper, without allowing time for the readers to make sense of the world of the text for themselves, divergent or convergent though that sense-making may be. Perhaps even the sign sequences have not been understood. As Peter Putnis puts it in his 'Divergence and Continuity: the Literature Commission and Higher Education', 20. 'in the name of avoiding dissection, (my students) avoid comprehension'.

We seldom analyse classroom interaction: we are often not sure what is actually happening, let alone why it is happening. Perhaps it was something we did, giving a non-verbal cue which we were not aware of. Perhaps it was the style of our questioning: our questions enabled us to back away from everything that was not tentative and partial. In Evan Hunter's novel The Blackboard Jungle, Rick, an English teacher, has had a crowded and distressing weekend which allowed him no time to prepare his Monday morning lesson. He knows he must face his delinquent class and on the bus travelling to school he desperately skims through an anthology. He sees the short story title, The Fifty-first Dragoon. He clutches at this straw. It is about soldiers, obviously, possibly about a bloody skirmish: it will appeal. Without bothering to read the story, Rick decides to bank on his proven capacity to read well extempore. When he stands before his surly class, he realises, is aghast to find that the story is called The Fifty-first Dragon. It is too late. He must proceed. The novel's account of the ensuing lesson is painfully real and finally exciting. Rick breaks through for the first time. It is a conversation, Rick and boys, boys among themselves. In the course of the lesson as the novelist tells it, Rick asks over forty questions. Often they are not good questions, but finally twenty five percent of the questions are what we may call 'training questions', not questions to elicit information, but to encourage thinking response or inferential comprehension. The questions are open to the tentative and the partial, to the boys' own worlds:

> '. .Are there people like that who fool themselves? Who need magic words?'
>
> 'Sure', Price said. 'My brother-in-law's like that'.
>
> 'How so, Price?'
>
> 'Oh he's a big bull artist, you know. He's always talkin' about his big deals, but he ain't really got no big deals. He's jus' a little crumb, you know? But he makes out like he's a big shot'.
>
> 'And is he one?' Rick asked.
>
> 'Naw, he's a crumb. But he talks so much, I think he believes it himself'.
>
> 'Like Rumplesnitz, you mean?'
>
> Price hesitated a moment, and then a smile flowered on his face. 'Yeah, 'he said, surprised, 'like Rumplesnitz. Just like that'. 21.

Methodology should not be a chance procedure. 'I'm going to take this poem, short story, novel extract into class and see what happens': this will not do as a general approach. I do not believe we can live by the Heidiggerian concept of the Feldweg, the traverse of open country. Unless we are very careful, we may foolishly fall off the edge of the world's landscape. This is not to deny the obvious value of encouraging tentative and partial response, but merely to remind ourselves that pupils have a right to expect that we know where we are going or at least that we are aware of the marshes and pits that may dot the open country. Just as the 1970's dust of Dartmouth is beginning to settle, so the theologising of the child is being seen in a more stable context. Teachers always set things up: that is their nature and function. Yet how they may go about doing this is myriad: to set things up is no bar to autonomy.

Now it is true that teachers of English, like all teachers, have at their disposal in most schools a whole range of aids, verbal (audiotapes, recordings), non-verbal (reproductions of art-works, greatly enlarged photographs or photo-cards) and audio-visual (films, videotapes). We have already reminded ourselves of the sea of media presentations that laps about our classroom doorways. We no longer train our pupils to write formal letters, some of us, because we prefer to attend to the use of the telephone. What, then, of the written word?

A substantial proportion of print, as it comes to us daily, is already at least in the broad sense of the term, a caption, drawing attention to or accompanying material which is essentially pictorial. It is interesting to note, in parentheses, that, contrary to McLuhan's expectations radio is holding its own. But it is nonetheless obvious that most of us and most of our pupils receive principal informational and emotional stimuli in the form of image and illustration. 22. In a fairly rare effusion of optimism, Steiner writes:

> "The astonishing fact is not that this should be so, but that the word in the old sense should still be so vital. We touch here on an extremely puzzling phenomenon. Even the most superb of movies can only be seen a very limited number of times (say five or six) before it goes stale, before an impression of utter inertness takes over. Why should this be? In what way is a piece of print - a poem, a chapter in a novel, a scene from a play - any less 'fixed', static, unchanging than a film frame? Yet we can read the same poem a hundred times over in our lives and it will literally be new to us. Where does the difference lie? What is there about purely visual material which does not have the inherent repeatability, the sameness within change which is the attribute of the written word? So far as I know, neither aesthetics nor psychology have come up with an answer. But the evidence is, I believe, unmistakable, and it entails a power of survival for printed speech which no competing medium has." 23.

'Inherent repeatability', 'sameness within change', these are pregnant phrases. We must believe that a re-read poem or novel is literally new to us. That is the power of 'the word in the old sense'.

At the same time, we must in the 1980's learn to cope with the enormous distinction between the great bulk of semi-attentive reading - which ranges from advertisements in buses and train carriages to the pulp novel - and what we must call attentive and genuine full reading. We must learn to encourage in pupils this second kind of reading, in a word, to mediate literature: Now OED always useful, is particularly useful here. 'Mediate' is 'to form a connecting link' (we understand that clearly enough), 'intervene for the purpose of reconciling', (helping to place grids over maps) and 'to be the medium for bringing about (a result) or conveying (a gift, etc.)'. Do we think of that often enough? Conveying a gift? Yes: conveying a gift.

NOTES

1. James Britton, 'Response to Literature', James R. Squire (ed.), Response to Literature, Champaign, Ill., N.C.T.E., 1968, p.9.

2. David Allen, English Teaching Since 1965: how much growth? London, Heinemann Educational, 1980. See also I.V. Hansen, The Water and the Wave: an approach to literature in secondary schools. Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1979, pp. 55-75.

3. op. cit., pp. 132-3.

4. Kieran Egan, Educational Development, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979.

5. Egan's ironic stage is outlined, op. cit., pp. 82-89, and need not detain us here. Essentially this stage represents a clear appreciation of where we end and the world begins and a locating of details by reference to each other: we are freed from self.

6. David Allen, op. cit., p. 27.

7. cf. work being done under the impulse of Peter Moss, Department of Education, University of Adelaide eg. the first of a series of occasional papers, Christine Higgins, 'Private Meanings, Public Channels: an examination of culture-making on talk-back radio' (undated, duplicated, 49 pp.)

8. Fred and Merrelyn Emery, A Choice of Futures: to enlighten or inform, Canberra, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, 1975 (duplicated, 213 pp.)

9. op. cit., p. 142.

10. In E.D. Hirsch, Jr, Validity in Interpretation, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976.

11. op. cit., p.8.

12. ibid., p. 223.

13. I.V. Hanson and Barry Duff, 'Small group responses to literature in undirected learning situations', Report to the Education Research and Development Committee, Canberra, Australia, February, 1977 (duplicated, 255 pp.)

14. See Robert Freed Bales, Personality and Interpersonal Behaviour, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970, pp. 3-10, 30-50.

15. F.R. Leavis, The Common Pursuit, London, Chatto & Windus, 1972, p.213.

16. Geoffrey Summerfield, p.121.

17. My emphasis.

18. George Steiner, 'Humane Literacy', Language and Silence, London, Peregrine Books, 1979, pp. 23-4.

19. in A. Melnik and J. Merritt, Reading: today and tomorrow, University of London Press/The Open University Press, 1972, summarised as an appendix

in Developing Fluent Reading, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1977, pp. 158-9. The major categories are 1. Literal Comprehension, 2. Reorganisation, 3. Inferential Comprehension, 4. Evaluation, 5. Appreciation.

20. Peter Putnis, p.154.

21. Evan Hunter, The Blackboard Jungle, London, Panther, (reprinted) 1962, p. 227.

22. Consider the highly-wrought (almost rococo) decorations that accompany course and source books for English programmes.

23. George Steiner, 'After the Book?' On Difficulty and Other Essays, London, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 199.

1984 AND OUR TEACHING

Florence Lewis (UNITED STATES)

I believe 1984 is the book of the eighties because it is about language, and language has power to make or break people, who are, after all, made only of flesh. A word can encourage, create, disenchant the flesh or destroy it. Let me give you an example close to home, my home. Before I came to the conference, the Third International Conference of the Teachers of English, I had rather serious doubts about doing a book, a whole book on 1984. To the first stirrings of ambition I attached words like presumption, immodesty, arrogance, aggression; and laboring under such libel, I could scarcely lift my head, let alone my pen. A paper seemed right, but not a book. At the conference, I met a very dear friend to whom I gave voice to my doubts, and he gave me sustenance with a word. He reminded me of the parable of the talents ... that I might have a talent lodged with me useless. Nor would I discover that talent, unless I began the book. So rather than arrogance or presumption, why not sloth or cowardice. For these labels would reveal my being a coward because I fear presumption. Say talent, say gift and I can hold my head up. My friend reminded me of responsibility and duty to the self, as well. In short, he gave me words that had the power to restore me, to move me, to make me write. They helped restore the past to me in my present state of uncertainty and doubt. They returned older friends to me, the Testaments, John Milton.

When I was a child my mother sang folk songs based on the Testaments. The story of Adam and Eve's departure from Paradise she told in novel fashion. It was, of course, Eve's fault all the way; Adam was hopelessly dumb next to Eve. It was Eve who really disobeyed the Lord, and its was Eve who, when she first ate of the apple, understood at once how naked she was. She understood naked, nakedness, not with the same agony that Shakespeare gave to Lear, for Eve was yet young in labor. What she understood was desire, shame, her sexuality and therefore, her difference from bird and beast. She could now feel, which was the first step to thinking, and this God would have prevented if he could. And so would Big Brother.

Orwell took me like a magnet when I was already grown up and accustomed to words. A little girl, I would listen to adults fly through sentences and wonder at their dexterity. To have thoughts, to have words seemed to me treasure beyond what one could purchase at the local candy store. But once having acquired this dexterity, I took language joyfully for granted, and Orwell, when he first entered my house, was a novelist my older brother rather liked and later defended when the left wing press denounced Orwell as traitor, Trotskyite. I read the early novels dutifully, as I read everything on my brother's bookshelf, but it was not until I began to teach that the magnet drew me. "Shooting an Elephant" was the first shock of recognition. The first phrase "In Moulmein in lower Burma I was hated by large numbers of people ..." It was instant. It was love at first sight, for I had been raised with the Barrack Room Ballads and sang along with my baritone brother all the verses of Kipling's "The Road to Mandalay". I knew the British empire was on its way out, but I didn't know the British soldier or a poor British constable was so despised. Not "Come yer back to Mandalay", anymore, but, rather the way I now perceived it: "Leave before we expose you altogether; Leave while you have a bit of dignity." What struck me even more than the idea that Orwell had given the lie to Kipling's song was the organization of the essay. A teacher of composition, a timid free-lancer, myself, I was impressed with the technique of this essay. A series of anecdotes, human and entertaining, the sort of tales one swaps at cocktails and tea, the anecdotes lead the reader to the heart of the essay. The one sentence which the essay expands* ... that when the white man turns tyrant, it is his own freedom he destroys." Orwell was a teacher as well as a writer. This was a very moral essay and a very moral man. And then I read "Politics and the English Language". It was this essay that caused an explosion in my brain. I suppose this is what our young people mean when they say that something has blown their minds. The essay, "Politics and the English Language" began with the same conversational, easy "man to man" tone that characterized the other essays, but the swapping, casual touch was not missing. There was an earnest, "Let's get down to business, there's something we can do about this problem" that swept me right along to the heart of the essay and back to the beginning and the end ..." the defense of the indefensible." When men know they are lying or supsect they are lying, the language they use will reveal their duplicity, says Orwell. Myself I knew that politicians were always masters of this art, but now Orwell revealed honest citizens, literary critics, Professors of Economics, ladies and gentlemen who wrote editorials to local newspapers to be practitioners of this art. So one had to be on guard against men in public office because one knew they lived only to feed at public troughs, but teachers, critics, ordinary gentlemen and ladies had to be on guard against their own tendency to deceive. At least "we" could practice Orwell's exercises and clean up our own prose and thinking. It was the power hungry against whom we had to do real battle, Hitler and his mob of butchers and those who now imitated his style. Hitler and his never ending hate, not for two minute intervals during the day but perpetual, unceasing hate that turned on the tribe of Goldsteins everywhere and from Goldstein moved to "mongrels" of all persuasions ... The Hitlers were still among us. I was now ready for another look at 1984.

I had taught the book. Like other teachers I had made interesting comparisons between 1984 and Huxley's Brave New World and paused dutifully at the devotion of both Winston and the Savage to William Shakespeare. But I had never asked my students why. Why Shakespeare? What does he symbolize? I had taught both books as flawed novels ... They lacked round characters for the obvious reason a brainwashed English teacher would offer: A great writer simply cannot do everything, can he? And why cannot great writers create round characters for a particular work? All they need to do is imagine the round characters, do they not? But what sort, what kind of people were Orwell and Huxley trying to imagine? Why, robots, of course. Mechanical men and women. Yes, of course. But the big "why" I did not ponder. I did not ask myself the questions my commission on literature forced me to reconsider. The Triune by which I had been raised -- "What does a work say, why does it say what it says, how does it say what it says" -- is an effective way to examine any work of literature, but not half so effective as those that came out of our subgroup: "Where does a work come from and where does the work want to take us?" The latter question unlocks speaker, tone, and point of view with greater ease than "What does a work say, why does it say, and how does it say."

---

* Kenneth Burke's definition of a literary work, "the indefinite expansion of a sentence."

I did not apply the first triune until Politics and the English Language forced me to take another look at 1984. I have been looking ever since, and events in politics and literature and life have kept me focussed on that book. I do not know about the Australian-New Zealand press, but scarcely a week goes by that the magazines to which I subscribe -- Harper's Encounter, Newsweek -- do not quote from Orwell's essays or 1984. In a recent issue from Encounter I counted five references to Orwell. Literary criticism, politics, the use of language, Orwell's name intrudes because his words reveal. It is not that writers defer to him in order to achieve a Ph.D. because he is somebody's particular idol; it is simply that his words are prophetic, that his future has become our present. The indefensible made defensible by language: Viet Nam, Watergate, the Moonies ... The sounds of Duckspeak in sales pitches and advertising and newscasts, not to mention political oratory from the late but scarcely lamented Joseph McCarthy to slightly less distinguished practitioners of the art like Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmie Carter ... And these examples of Orwell's prophecy derive from the Western World. In Czechoslovakia one cannot speak Orwell's name, let alone translate his works, although James Joyce may be translated and even Joseph Heller's Catch 22. In Australia there is, as I have mentioned, a film Dirt Cheap. It is a film about language. It is a rather important film about the defense of the indefensible made defensible by power. Language does not disguise power in this film; rather it moves the question.

1984 is the book of the eighties. I think we must teach it to ourselves and to our students. How to show, to demonstrate that the word creates the flesh or destroys it? How to show, to demonstrate that even men who speak "cleanly" to one another (this happens in Dirt Cheap for one brutal moment as it does in 1984) may yet continue to keep other men in contempt and bondage when the others have not the power to reply to tyranny. Even when the power to know, to understand has not been denied, the need to practice language is imperative. The cards are on the table, so to speak. God, the Father, comes to Eve and says, "Now you know, don't you? The deck is stacked." And Eve can reply ... "Well, I refuse to play." The tragedy of our times is that more and more we are playing and being played upon ... blind.

If we have before us the "what" of 1984, the big "how", (that it requires the novel form to say what it has to say) and something of the "why", how do we approach the first chapter, the one that begins; "it was a bright cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen."[1] It's not a chapter this first part of the book, more like an entry in a diary which the narrator is keeping, even as Winston is attempting to make the first entry into his diary. Part I ends as abruptly as a diary ends, for Winston is called away from his writing to answer a knock on the door, and the reader is called away too. Our job will be two fold: to examine Orwell's language, as the language of an environment which seeks to shape him, remake him by depriving him of words and feeding him slogans and acronyms the better to make it impossible for him to assess reality. Winston's keeping the diary is his attempt to get at meaning, the meaning of Big Brother. Meaning in his book finally becomes the struggle of the human consciousness to retain language. We will return to the meaning of "meaning", as we work our way through 1984, but as clearly as Part I, we see this intention, to get at the meaning of language. Man is nothing without this miracle. Now we begin to see the process by which it may be taken from him.

Kenneth Burke reminds us in The Philosophy of Literary Form that Shaw's Pygmalion is a work about language. Shaw's Pygmalion shows us in "almost terrifyingly, simplified form ... the heroine building herself synthetically by mastering the insignia, the linguistic and manneristic labels of the class among whom she would, by this accomplishment, symbolically enrol herself ... Shaw's heroine is making herself over by artificially acquiring an etiquette of speech and manners."[2]

Orwell shows in equally terrifying, simplified form Winston Smith fighting, struggling against the insignia, the lingustic, and manneristic labels that will enrol him in the community of Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police. Winston refuses to accept what Burke would call the "social idioms" of his class. Winston's weapon - it is also his cross - is his memory. His memory keeps insisting upon a richer symbolism than the present environment can offer him, and by the old symbols he carries on his present rebellion, what Orwell described in Part I, as "the interminable restless monologue running inside his head."[3]

Of course the monologue in Winston's head is richer than the words he finally enters in his diary, for the monologue is ably assisted by the narrator, who is telling Winston's story. Describing first a scene from "the flicks", Winston writes, in his diary:

> "Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him, first you saw him walloping along in the water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopters (sic) gunsights, then he was full of holes and the sea around him turned pink..."[4]

What is absent from this first entry is punctuation, but the language is quite vivid. There are similies: "walloping along like a porpoise". A young child screaming with fright and holding on to his mother is described as, "hiding between her breasts as if he were trying to burrow right into her." There is metaphor: "helicopters hovering", "the boat went all to matchwood". "A helicopter with a camera in its nose ..." "planted ... a bomb ..."[5] The language is sensuous, memorable, despite the overuse of the past tense of the verb "to be". Now, here is the narrator speaking. He is describing O'Brien:

> "O'Brien was a large, burly man with a thick neck and a course, humorous brutal face. Despite his formidable appearance, he had a certain charm of manner. He had a trick of resetting his spectacles on his nose which was curiously disarming - in some indefinable way, curiously civilized. It was a gesture which, if anyone still thought in such terms, might have recalled an eighteenth-century nobleman offering his snuff-box."[6]

This passage is, of course, more reflective than the prose of Winston's diary, but we are still very much in Winston's head, hearing his thoughts through the narrator, who is third person, to be sure, but very much single-person point of view. He is very close to Winston, and it is this lack of distance which makes the discourse on language very convincing, but Winston, a flat character, as E.M. Forster defines this term in Aspects of the Novel.[7] Winston is rather too predictable. "Flowers for Algernon", the short story by Daniel Keyes,[8] makes an attempt through first person narration to show the gain and then the loss of language in the mind of a mentally retarded man, the fluctuations, the result of an experiment conducted for what appears to be human reasons, but the "why" of "Flowers for Algernon" is a gimmick. We weep for the poor man who is the subject of the experiment; we do not question the purpose, the necessity for such an experiment in real life. The weeping then is gratuitous. We weep for ourselves that our "nobler" sentiments have been engaged for awhile, until we discover that we've been had. And we do not reflect that the story shows language expanding and then decreasing to the horizons from whence it came, not for any reasons we can respect. "Flowers for Algernon" is not a story about language. It could be. That is its weakness, but Orwell's Winston Smith is always in command of his language, even when he isn't, even when his mind finally belongs to Big Brother.

> "How easy it was! Only surrender and everything else followed. It was like swimming against a current that swept you backwards however hard you struggled, and then suddenly deciding to turn round and go with the current instead of opposing it. Nothing had changed except your own attitude ..."

We are here almost at the end of the novel, and yet this is rather too much language for Winston, even if it is the narrator speaking for Winston. The testimony of the Moonies and those who have been held hostage for several months is that they lose the power to reflect, to remember, to protest because they have lost words. Winston is rather too extraordinary, and we lose him as a round character for this reason. But we do not lose the story. We are swept along by the unfolding of a phenomenon we call brainwashing. The experience in 101 will render Winston a sobbing vegetable and the reader in awe that he has been witness to this phenomenon closer to home. Close to our hearths and our hearts are the brainwashed veterans from the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and, more recently, the recycled children of the Moonies.

It is the understanding of language that so fascinates the reader as early as Part I. We begin on page 1 with Victory Mansions, the name of the grimy tenement where Winston lives. There are also the acronyms which will follow Winston wherever he goes: Ingsoc for English Socialism; Minipeace, for the organization that concerns itself with war; Miniluv, for the building and the personnel which concerns itself with torture and is surrounded by barbed-wire, machine gun nests and gorilla-faced guards; Miniplenty, for the office of economic affairs whose job it is to distribute scarcity. The relationship between euphemism and acronym is our first stop. Victory Mansions could conceivably produce a snicker from even the gray inhabitants who dwell in its grease and grime, with the exception of Mrs. Parsons, a wrinkled woman of thirty, who wears dust even in the lines of face. But if we reduce Victory Mansions to "Torymans" or "VIM", for example, we lose the original incongruity. "Torymans"[10] like C.S. Lewis' "Bluspels" is too faraway from the original source. Besides, it is fiction to begin with, whereas Kant's blue Spectacles are closer to analogy. But the kind of "tarning" that takes place in euphemism is what we should examine. "Tarning" is Owen Barfield's word, a word which he explains he has derived from "tarning", a term used extensively under the heel of the Nazi tyranny in Germany for the precautionary practice of hiding one meaning in another, the allusion being to the Tarnhelm of Nibelungs.[11] Barfield in his admirable work on poetic diction does not pursue euphemism; he explains metaphor. The difficulty with his explanations is, I think, that much as one image can lose itself or hide itself in another, if the intention is to hide meaning - please note above "the precautionary practice of hiding", - I do not believe we can have metaphor, only euphemism. For euphemism disguises reality; metaphor illuminates. The very term "tarning: from "Tarnhelm" makes "tarning" suspect. It tarnishes; it taints. It is the kind of legal fiction that belongs to Jeremy Bentham, that Newton of Legislation, who, in his scrutiny of legal abstract terms, managed to explain the reason for all of mankind's sophistries. Bentham's Book of Fallacies ... is an analysis to show the devices ... which political reactionaries use when they lack reasonable or valid arguments to present against a measure they hate."[12] Add to hate, a measure they want to hide, and we have "tarning". The tarning is less insidious in Victory Mansions, more so in the acronyms, like Ingsoc. The idea of hiding ... "to substitute mentally the concept of saying one thing and meaning another ..."[13] is evident in IngSoc, which not only hides English and Socialism but packs a hidden wallop. There is something lurking in the acronym, a threat, a sock, an iron sock, as in "ingot". In the English consciousness there could conceivably still lurk a memory of the iron foundries. In Miniluv and Minipeace and Miniplenty, what is hidden in addition to the big lie is the image of Big Brother, who loves the scouts and the spies, and the junior anti-sex league and who dishes out doses of his love and supervision everywhere his children turn.

I find nowhere in the collected essays of George Orwell a reference to Bentham but so kindred is their view of the way men use words, so parallel their probing of language that if Orwell does not acknowledge Bentham it is because he has absorbed him. Or we can say, that if Orwell didn't know Bentham he would have to invent him. It is Bentham from whom we first hear "the defense of the undefensible" in The Book of Fallacies, the section where he explains Imposter Terms (ad Judicium).

> This fallacy is similar to the one which has just been exposed, but it is applied chiefly to the defense of things which under their proper names are manifestly indefensible. For instance, persecutors in matters of religion have no such word as presentation in their vocabularies: zeal is the word by which they characterise all their actions.[14]

Sophistry has always been the defense of the indefensible. "Sophistry", says Bentham, "is a hydra which if all the necks could be exposed the force would be destroyed."[15] The Book of Fallacies has as its purpose to expose those necks by exposing the language strategems which repress reason and purposely cause confusion, strategems like name calling, inneundo, appeal to authority, appeal to caution.

And behind these strategems lurks a tyrant, a despot, a man disposed to get what he wants by hidden persuasion.

> "The mischief common to all these ways of thinking and arguing (which in truth, as we have seen, are but one and the same method couched in different forms of words) is their serving as a cloke (sic) and pretence and ailment to despotism in practice, a despotism, however, in disposition, which is but too apt when pretence and power offer to show itself in practice.[16]

The above passage is from Bentham's Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation first published in 1789.

Orwell, in the 1940s, is not so optimistic that exposure alone can cure those bottlenecks, but he does give us advice about caring enough to take the time to let the meaning choose the word, not the other way around. When Orwell speaks of swindles and perversions in the 1940s he is still attacking the impostor terms, the vague generalities, the sham distinctions, the pretences and corruptions of language which Bentham was suspicious of in the 1780s. But Bentham's swindles are mild, and his hope is that it will be possible to correct men's habits. For example, Bentham's distinction between neutral terms and what he calls "eulogistic" and "dyslogistic" terms are supposed to make us cautious as well as fair in our judgement of men and institutions. Eulogistic terms are laudatory; dyslogistic terms are vituperative.[17] All we need do is take account of the neutral. Everything is set out for us.

> "In speaking of the conduct behaviour, intention, motive or disposition of this or that man, if he is one who is indifferent to you and if you care not whether he is ill or well thought of, you will employ a neutral term. If he is a man whom you wish to recommend to favour especially a man of your own party, you will employ the eulogistic term ... But if he is a man whom it is your aim to consign to aversion or contempt, you will employ the dyslogistic term"[18]

Words like lust, avarice, luxury are dyslogistic. Here is a sample of dyslogistic prose from 1984.

> "As usual the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the enemy of the people had flashed into the screen. There were hisses here and there among the audience ... Goldstein was the renegade and backslider who once, long ago (how long ago nobody quite remembered) had been one of the leading figures of the party, almost on a level with Big Brother himself; and then had engaged in counter revolutionary activities ... He was the primal traitor, the earliest defiler of the party's purity. All subsequent crimes against the party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage heresies, deviations, sprang directly out of his teaching."[19]

For Winston there are no longer neutral terms by which a thinking person may judge his honesty or the honesty of what others teach him. Even the term neutral will have to go, when "free" comes to mean only free of lice. The meaning of neutral is no longer neutral but denatured. And this conscious manipulation of men's minds by the application of eulogistic or dyslogistic terms to a man or institution, this conscious application of euphemism (a variety of the eulogistic plus "taming") this conscious application of acronyms (a variety of neutralizing by reducing the picture of an institution or person) - all this conscious manipulation suggests that "semantic change seems not to be an unconscious affair, that it may be rather a matter of habits getting established precisely because one group is trying to establish them."[20]

These intellectual and practical exercises on this novel do lead to meaning. 1984 cannot be a short story. It needs the process of a novel, the special strategies of a novel.

> "Let us suppose that you ask me: What did the man say? And that I answer: He said 'yes'." You still do not know what the man said. You would not know unless you knew more about the situation, and about the remarks that preceded his answer.
>
> Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers; they are strategic answers, stylized answers. For there is a difference in style or strategy, if one says "yes" in tonalities that imply "thank God" or in tonalities that imply "alas!" So I should propose an initial working distinction between strategies and situations whereby we think or poetry (I here use the term to include any work of critical or imaginative cast) as the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations. These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them.[21]

A novel has meaning. And if we accept Burke's definition of a literary work that it is the indefinite expansion of a sentence, then the sentence which I take to be the sentence of 1984 is that "Language makes or unmakes human beings," and that sentences requires for its expansion a story as well as a treatise on language ... a novel.

Notes

1. George Orwell, 1984, Signet Classic (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961), p. 10.

2. Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (New York: Vantage Books, 1957, p. 97.

3. Orwell, p. 11.

4. Orwell, p. 11.

5. Orwell, p. 11.

6. Orwell, p. 13.

7. E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel.

8. Daniel Keyes, "Flowers for Algernon" in Points of Views, Ed. James Moffett and Kenneth McEleheny (New American Library, 1960.

9. Orwell, p. 229.

Notes continued

10. C.S. Lewis, "Blyspels and Flalansferes" in The Importance of Language, Ed. Max Black (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

11. Owen Barfield, "Poetic Diction and Legal Fiction" in The Importance of Language, Ed. Max Black, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 55.

12. Charles W. Everett, Jeremy Bentham, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 166-168. Everett quoting Bentham in these lines.

13. Barfield, p. 55.

14. Everett, Jeremy Bentham, p. 185.

15. Ibid.

16. Everett, Jeremy Bentham, p. 185.

17. Everett, Jeremy Bentham, p. 184.

18. Ibid.

19. Orwell, p. 13-14.

20. William P. Alston, Philosophy of Language, Foundations of Philosophy Series, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 57.

21. Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form, (New York: Vintage Book, 1957), p. 3.

TEXT AND READER

David Mallick (AUSTRALIA)

The hours of tape recordings from the literature commission shows that there is a strong agreement on certain principles of literature teaching. These principles can be easily summarised :

(1) Teachers must not see their role as one of giving information about literature or one of imposing literary judgements on students.

(2) It is imperative that teachers see the personal response of the reader as being all-important in the development of literary judgement.

(3) There must always be attempts to link the reading with the students' experiences and concerns.

(4) Reading is a creative activity in which the poem is recreated in the minds of the readers.

(5) There is no necessary dichotomy between the creative and the critical.

There is nothing new in these statements. They are even looking a little tired. But in the tape recordings, mixed up in vigorous discussion of the importance of the principles, we have the doubts and uncertainties of the teachers as they reflect upon their own and their colleagues' practices.

1. Are the demands made on the teaching of literature in the 80's going to be met by present methods of teaching? Will they need to change if there is to be preserved this vital quality of celebration that should be part of all literature and its teaching?

2. When we say we teach literature I believe we have to really closely analyse precisely what we mean by the word teach.

3. Reading and understanding are both logical and intuitive ... I seldom give my kids enough time to read intensively, silently, so that the poem takes them with a sigh ... we are teachers, but we have also begun to ask questions about process : where does a poem come from, where does it want to take us?

The recordings reveal some fascinating and perhaps unique examples of teachers at full stretch with reading and meaning, teaching and learning. My 'reading' of these recordings suggests to me that there are two main problem areas that need to be explained more carefully in theory and documented more fully in practice.

(a) The reading of the poems brought home to delegates how complex any response to literature is. Can a recognition of this complexity influence our teaching?

(b) Can we become more sensitive to the possibilities of the partial and the selective response and will this alertness help us to develop a personal response that is also more informed?

COMPLEXITY OF RESPONSE.

I want to make a case that many teachers, in theory and hence in practice, have a simplistic view of the process of response and this is evident in the way views on the subject tend to polarise. We can imagine two extreme views : those who argue that any kind of relation to a work of art must be detached and impersonal and those who argue that the only valid responses are personal responses. Evidence of how little we have examined the complexity of response is shown in the looseness and inadequacy of our vocabulary in talking about the problem : objective-subjective; accurate-impressionistic; clear thinking-emotional; knowledge-appreciation; impersonal-personal. These words are unsatisfactory because they describe polarities - with the view often taken by specialists - academics, teachers - that personal, emotional, subjective are the enemies of true reading and learning and discipline, revealing self-indulgence and irresponsibility. It is the limitation of this particular view that this paper is principally concerned with.

Most teachers in their thinking about literary criticism have been influenced by the ideas and practices of the new criticism. The new criticism reacted against the biographical, historical and loose impressionistic criticism, where the reader taking refuge in historical data or becoming preoccupied with his own emotional responses lost sight of the work itself. There developed the idea of objective impersonal criticism which saw the poem as necessarily something apart from the reader. The movement led to an emphasis on explication, formal analysis and a study of the techniques of literature. I am generalising dangerously here.* It would be unfair to accuse the best of the new critics of seeing reading as a matter of technical skill rather than moral sensibility and personal judgement. One can immediately name Leavis, Eliot, Knights as critics who, in their analysis, were always concerned to show the relationship of the work to real human issues. However it is not unreasonable to argue that the call for more objective critcism and commentary on the words on the page has led to some of the more questionable practices in schools. In particular one could point to the plan of textbooks which tried to implement a better approach to studying the words on the page. The pupil is presented with a passage of prose or verse and required to answer a number of questions on it. I don't wish to go into the inadequacies of such work here but such classroom work suggests that reading is seen as a fairly mechanical procedure. Perhaps more importantly the result can be seen in more human terms. We all know of that nervous look in the student's eyes as he wonders is this a good poem; is it a bad poem; should I agree to liking it; and especially, what does he expect me to say about it?

---

*English teachers should be constantly reminded of two remarks of Leavis - "A response is personal or it is nothing."

"It is hardly possible to insist too much on the training of sensibility as prior and irremissible. Literary study unassociated with it becomes infallibly academic and barren - a matter of profitless memorising, of practice in graceful or scholarly irrelevance, or learning metrical feet and drawing graphs of plots and action."

This attitude to criticism can be seen at work in all kinds of ways. A first year undergraduate in explaining her dislike for Lawrence's The Rainbow, wrote :

> "When reading about the endless destructive battles between Anna and Will Brangwen and of their torpid sexual relations, I felt myself longing for some kind of balancing feature, for instance a passage as lyrical and simple as the one earlier about Tom's comforting of Anna while her mother is in labour. Yet in the Anna-Will marriage even the father-child relations have become slightly twisted and strange...."[1]

There are several things to say about this writing :

a. It seems a very reasonable critical/human point to make about the relationships in the novel.

b. There is evidence of an active engagement with the text. The phrase "I felt myself longing ..." has the ring of an authentic response.

c. Is she not indirectly testifying to the successful power of Lawrence's writing on the destructive nature of the relationships? It seems to me to be a highly commendable critical reaction to the power of the writing.

But what is significant for us here is the comment of the examiner :

> "Failure to relate your discussions to the text : the language and imagery. Your arguments are highly personalised (affective criticism remember) and to make them at all convincing you must support yourself adequately."

Whereas the student is breaking away from the stock response the teacher here easily falls into it - the easy rejoinder "affective criticism", implying that there is something soft about such thinking; the clichéd "support yourself adequately from the text". I am sure Newton is right when he claims that the result of such heavy handedness (perhaps bad reading might be a better accusation to make) is "steady discouragement, so that people lose enthusiasm for the study and while more or less successfully going through the motions, in some cases with great dutifulness and diligence, never get out of it anything like what they could have got."[2]

Another small example was when a student teacher was using The Man for all Seasons. Dividing the class of seventeen year olds into groups she asked the students to discuss the morality of More's decision in sacrificing his family for his own conscience. Two of the groups left Thomas and his family and began to discuss very intensely and thoughtfully a case of a conscientious objector to the Vietnam war. The teacher asked the group to come back to the play and the question. This is an interesting example in that it shows a young teacher who was willing to open up a moral question for discussion but who retreated when the students began to explore the human implications. Subsequent discussion with her convinced me that she acted in this way because she had very firm, and I think fairly narrow, views on the kinds of talk that should go on in literature lessons.

It may be objected that I have chosen dramatic examples, I am not so sure of that. The important point is that such teaching shows a certain attitude to criticism that I think is dangerously limited. Behind such practice is a view of literature and critical response - the notion of the poem-as-object and the neglect of the contribution that the reader brings to the reading event.

David Daiches' complaint about such criticism is that "it is impatient with the testimony of readers". He goes on to say : "In the last analysis, the characteristic method of the new criticism - immensely helpful though it has been, and brilliantly as it is often employed - is inadequate because it is too easy. Its tendency to what Professor Crane has called 'critical monism' leads to a drastic over-simplification of what in fact a work of literary art is, what kind of pleasure it gives and why it is valuable."[3]

As so often happens one extreme view has been met by another. The opposition would argue that a poem is the experience of the reader, that a poem is nothing outside the mental processes of the individual reader and thus is identical with the mental state or process which we experience when reading a poem.

Now this is a sketch of two extreme views, on the right are those who hold for the autonomy of the text, opposing the anti-intelluctualism of the personal response. On the left are those who emphasise the importance of the reader and who oppose any kind of authoritative judgement. Despite the extremism of such views thus stated, and despite the artificiality of such theoretical positions, it is likely that in our teaching we do work from some such views. I want to argue that both views are inadequate because they oversimplify the whole process of response.

What happens when we read a poem?

We can begin with a quotation from I.A. Richard's Practical Criticism. "Making up our minds about a poem is the most delicate of all undertakings. We have to gather together millions of semifluting impulses into a momentary structure of fabulous complements whose core or germ is given us in the words - what we make of that momentary trembling order in our minds is exposed to countless ireelevant influences."[4]

Richards gave his very able Cambridge students a number of "extremely good and extremely bad poems" to comment on. The students were not told the titles of the poems or the names of the poets. The results were astonishing, revealing the incompetence of these highly intelligent and gifted students in reading poetry with any insight and understanding. He documented all the failures of this reading : not understanding what the poet means or how he feels towards his subject or his reader; failure to see the intention of the poet; failure to see images or hear rhythms correctly; having responses that are too inhibited, too callow, too sentimental; relying heavily on stock responses and misreading through "irrelevant associations".

Here I want to give one of the poems Richards used, give some fairly typical examples of his students' responses, discuss the influence he's had and describe a small experiment that may help us to question that influence.

The poem is D.H. Lawrence's Piano.

> "Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
> Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
> A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
> And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.
>
> In spite of myself the insidious mastery of song
> Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
> To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
> And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.
>
> So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
> With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
> Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
> Down in the flood remembrance, I weep like a child for the past."

The following are examples of the replies Richards received :

> If this, on further inspection, should prove not to be silly, maudlin, sentimental twaddle, I have missed the point. Such it certainly seems to me, and I loathe it. It is a revelling in emotion for its own sake, that is nothing short of nauseating. Moreover, it's badly done. I object to "cosy" and "tinkling" used of a piano that elsewhere "booms" or is "appassionato" is just absurd. If this is poetry, give me prose.
>
> This poem unfortunately associates itself with jazz, and "coal black mammies" thumping the old piano down in Dixie. This association condemns it somewhat prematurely. After careful study, however, it appears to be worthless. Its appeal is entirely sentimental, and the subject is one of the most hackneyed. Nearly every popular song deals with the same topic, and the thing is not well done. "Piano" as a disyllable has an unpleasant sound. "The heart of me" is also obnoxious.
>
> One cannot help disliking the evocative use of such phrases as "old Sunday evenings", "cosy parlour", "vista of years", etc., which are nothing but so many calls to one's loose emotion to attach itself to them.

> A good example of feeling without artistry. The man evidently means everything he says, but he doesn't know how to say it, and he hasn't any idea that hymns in the cosy parlour are somehow wrong in poetry. The picture of the time the poet is grieving for is vivid and even awakes an answering sorrow, but the expression is all wrong; the continual running over of the lines is irritating, and the middle verse is very like a "Pears Annual" sort of print.

There are two important issues that can be raised from Richards' documentation and analysis.

1. His work Practical Criticism has had a considerable influence on literature teaching, expecially in high schools. (A note in The Cool Web claimed "its influence on examinations and classroom teaching has been enormous and, in general, disastrous.")[5] It is reasonable to accuse the work of being responsible for the flow of text books aimed at encouraging students to concentrate "on the words on the page." These books generally present passages of verse or prose and ask the student to answer questions which are designed to assess his understanding. There is no space here to examine the weaknesses of such texts but any reader who has read this far is likely to agree that such comprehension exercises have a deplorable influence on the teaching of poetry. The sad irony for Richards is that his work, which tried to develop a better understanding of the teaching of poetry, led to a kind of teaching which he condemned. This kind of teaching is exemplified in this quotation from Practical Criticism - "The sincere and innocent reader is much too easily bounced into emptying his mind by any literary highwayman who says I want your opinion and much too easily laid low because he has nothing to produce on these occasions."[6]

2. D.W. Harding is right when he claims that we have not done enough work on some of the issues that Richards raised.[7] The following questions deserve serious thought.

   How is it that such gifted students can read so badly?
   Would replication of the experiment today give similar results?
   What can we learn from Richards' accusation that the students' literary education was partly responsible for the results?
   Is Richards right when he argues that a feeble capacity to respond to poetry implies a corresponding incapacity to respond to life's issues?

But the issue I want to approach here concerns his statement about the complexity of response. A study of all Richards' work suggests a strange ambivalence. In a way he stood in two camps; he represented the new criticism - that study of literature must encourage close study of the words on the page and the integrity and the autonomy of the work of art must be preserved. On the other hand he was interested in the psychological aspects of response - what happens when we read.

The practical question is this. Richards based his devastating criticism on the written responses of his students, these responses being written at the end of the reading. It would perhaps have been more interesting and more important to know what the responses of the students were during the week of reading. Would the responses look differently and could Richards have written a different book with such answers?

To open up the question in a very small way I asked several matriculation students to take tbe poem Piano and in the privacy of their rooms; at their own leisure, talk about the poem with a tape recorder. It seemed reasonable to assume that a spoken response at the time of reading could give a truer indication of the process of responding than would the written answers and might throw up insights that could help in the teaching of literature.

Space allows only one reply to be quoted in full. I shall make reference to some of the others.

> Dusk is a really beautiful time of the day and so that when I read that this poem was set at that time I was immediately interested, and another thing, too, I began, I felt part of the poem; part of um this thing, the whole thing because just that small word, you know, I suppose it is one of the beautiful ways that this is written because the poem is so simple, because just by saying "dusk" and by the words "taking me back down a vista of years" that when I am reading I can just sort of be taken right away from this room. (STOP)
>
> This um part about "weeping to belong to the old Sunday evenings at home"; I suppose if you take it literally it would mean that the person talking has actually left home, but um I take it more to mean that it is sort of weeping not for the old Sunday evenings but more for sort of weeping of a lost, lost childhood, lost adolescence. Um this idea of the home and um the cosiness with the tinkling piano sort of all part of an image of childhood, an image of um the past for the person who wrote this, I think that's why they're weeping. (STOP)
>
> He does not want to cry, it is quite natural and this is "in spite of myself". He can see that, it is almost like um that when he left this world, this world of his childhood it's um like he's left um that natural reaction of crying behind, um um it's not till the end that you find out that it's actually um, actually a man, or I suppose he is a man now, a man who is talking um that you can see the, or I can see the real significance um of crying, it's sort of that it's a man crying makes it all sort of more, more poignant. (STOP)
>
> It came as a shock to read that it was a man talking because in the um middle verse where um he's weeping, weeping for the past I sort of I identified with it um not because I've had cosy Sunday evenings um or even that the piano tinkling would take me back, I suppose I identified because um the world of of childhood is in the past, and I know that if I heard a certain sound or smelt a certain smell that I'd get carried back too. (STOP)
>
> "The glamour of childish days"; it at first seemed um rather an inappropriate word almost put there to rhyme with the clamour before it at the end um end of the line but um it just suddenly occurred to me that um it is an appropriate word because childish days are given a glamour now for people who have passed their childhood, who have left it behind, there is a glamour, they do remember certain

certain little incidents. Childhood is always associated with um fun and games and playing and um and childish things and so I suppose in a way it is a glamour; the pain of childhood, I mean we still remember little incidents, very painful incidents, and the pain of those I don't think we will ever experience again but they're sort of subordinate in a way to this whole childish, this whole image of childhood. (STOP)

Childhood is remembered as an ideal world um and I suppose that's why he wants to, he wants to belong to it again. Although this "weeping to belong to the old Sunday evenings" I'm sure that's not why he's weeping, it's not to go back again, I'm sure it's sort of lamenting what's past, lamenting something that will never be experienced again. (STOP)

I think it's a sad poem um it's sad because, because the guy who wrote it um has grown, he's grown up um, he's sad that he has left childhood behind and that, that's I suppose that's the way it is for everyone that they have to grow up and leave childhood as a stage in their life. That's why I think it's so sad that um childhood should be a a section um of our lives that we've got to leave behind, I suppose that's sort of a reflection on on the process of growing up in our in our society um. (STOP)

Why is it that when we grow up we don't cry except at funerals or except in times of severe um stress. (STOP) It seems that um children um when they grow up leave behind all those spontaneous responses or it seems it seems that way that growing up is a rejection of childish things so I suppose in a way then people in our society aren't whole people bcause they've left that spontaneous part of them behind in childhood.

SECOND DAY.

"My manhood is cast down" and "I weep like a child"; there is an element that the poet um is crying and it's um I noticed yesterday this yesterday this "In spite of myself" and that that gave a hint of he didn't want to cry um but I was unaware of the words after that "insidious mastery", the fact that evil, that he, he thinks it's evil that the song is making him feel is making him look back to his childhood um and his "betrayal" it all enforces this not wanting to weep. It says that only his heart weeps, "the heart of me weeps to belong" um and it takes the music which evokes of of these these thoughts of his Sunday evenings, and the winter and the cosiness takes all of them um to actually bring his tears up to the surface.

His emotions actually draw up to such a height that he becomes unaware of the singer who, in the first place, transported him away from the present (PAUSE) and also he seems to become unaware of the piano um which is accomapnying the singer although um the way, in the line he says "the great black piano appassionato"; it sounds very jerky, almost unpoetic um but it does it does bring out um the fact that the piano is loud and has that plodding effect, you wonder whether the piano is in fact an accompaniment or whether it is actually drowning um the singer's voice. Whatever it's doing um the poet is becoming unaware of it, it's making a noise and this, this enforces the fact that um the poet really has been taken far away from the present, he is completely oblivious of what's going on around him. (STOP)

The poem is very simply written um yet in a very few words the poet has been able to convey um so much to me um. In the image "the vista of years" for example, you get the idea of a whole store of memories um, yet by the mere word "vista" there's a certain detachment, a certain looking at from afar which seems to emphasise the point that he's left these years far behind. (STOP)

And also the image "the flood of remembrance"; I rather like that image because that too conveys so much, it has that that feeling of the the flood of memories that tends to overtake you when you are overwhelmed by emotion, and then again the flood can also be linked to the flood of tears when he begins to weep. (STOP) And even taking that further, the idea of a flood overwhelms him um without him actually wishing it to do so. (STOP)

As I see it now there are two main things that occupy the poet when he wrote this poem um and I think one of those is the regret um for the loss of childhood and and with that a deep-down wish to return there, yet on the other hand there's a conscious effort not to return to childhood physically by crying (PAUSE) and here I think lies the other pre-occupation of the poet that um he's questioning the fact that it's shameful for adults, particularly men, to cry I think he is concerned particuarly with um the male point of view um because when you think of it why shouldn't men cry like women, it's just that society has imposed this "he man" um image upon men that seems to um um not excuse them for crying as women are excused. (STOP)

THIRD DAY.

Coming back to the poem today I feel much more detached from the whole, the whole image created and the first day I could have believed that I, I was actually in the same position as the poet getting taken "back down the vista of years" with him, back to my early childhood yet now it's sort of I feel like I am looking at it in a different light, less involved than before. When he says "the heart of me weeps to belong" there's an indication that when the poet wrote the poem there's an indication that his adult life wasn't satisfactory, wasn't satisfying um and that it lacked the security of his early days when he was at the piano with his mother.

I think that it's perhaps this longing for the security of childhood that he's weeping for rather than in fact lamenting it, I don't, I don't think it goes that deeply any more, (STOP) and I think too there's a longing for the simplicity of life as a child when there was only the "tinkling piano" as a guide. This would seem to indicate that he lived life for the moment and at the particular moment all he was concerned with was the piano and he was guided by that but now life's more complicated um and other elements enter into his life. (STOP)

Taking this example as being reasonably representative of the monologues we can make some worthwhile generalisations. First, there are all the signs of an active reader building up a response. In what ways is he active? There is a constant process of selection and rejection - a process of reinterpreting earlier parts of the poem in the light of later parts. There is a shuffling back and forth as some kind of meaning is sought for. We are reminded of James Britton's delightful image of "a response is more like a negative in a developing dish than a train coming through a tunnel". There are references to the reader's own life, the reader not just responding to the words but also reacting to the images, feelings, attitudes, associations that the words made. There are signs of dissatisfaction with his own assumptions and associations, evidence of what Louise Rosenblatt called "a self-ordering and self-correcting process",[8] the reader seeing the text as something apart from himself but also not seeing the text as a reason only for indulging in his own flights of fantasy. A reading shows that this disordered reaction gives room for subjectivism, fantasy, false starts but in this chaos of reflection there is a building up of meaning. Space does not allow the inclusion of any further examples but it is interesting to note here that the most "inferior" monologue was with a student who engaged in a more conventional literary analysis - a line by line explanation of the meaning and a dependence on using and looking for various techniques of poetry.

However, generalisations such as these can come too easily and the reader can still be left like Charles Lamb when he reads the original copy of Milton's Lycidas : "How it staggered me to see the fine things on their own, interlined, corrected as if their words were mortal, alterable ... as if inspiration were made up of parts, and these fluctuating, successive, indifferent! I will never go into the workshop of any great artist again".

It is worthwhile noting the process by which the student approaches the poem, attempts to "fill out the poem".

In the quoted example we have her own reflections on dusk, her concern at the strangeness of it being a man, the puzzling out of the pyschology of the character, treating the person in the poem as if he were a real person and ascribing hypothetical feelings and attitudes to him. This placing of the poem in a human context is very common throughout the monologues. Examples like the following are very common :

> "He seems to have a very strong yearning for the past ...".
>
> "You can sort of conjure up a much more vivid picture of the home; in part it seems very typical of the sort of English home situation of yesterday ..."
>
> "It is strange that a man should be so obsessed with his mother."
>
> "I seem to not quite understand why he is so obsessed."
>
> "Either he's had a very fine childhood or else he's looking at it through rosy glasses."

While we may be sympathetic to this "filling out of the poem" in human terms we may be puzzled by the contribution that such circular excursions make to the building up of a more refined meaning. What tracks can we follow through these musings?

A useful way to approach the problem is to compare the monlogues with the Richards' answers in one aspect. Richards said this about his students' responses to the poem - "Few readers will have difficulty in guessing where the division of opinion fell here. In subject, in metre, in in treatment, the poem almost pressingly invites condemnation on the scene of gross sentimentality, and the invitations were accepted."[9] He argues that his student brought to the text ready made responses and habits of response. These reactions were so easily touched off that they hindered any reading of the poem, the students responding to phrases in the poem that have some connection with their own pre-conceived ideas on the subject. The poem deals with a familiar subject, childhood recollections of a mother playing the piano, and the Cambridge students were sufficiently sophisticated to be on their guard against the possible sentimental treatment of the theme. In their responses they seemed to be so much on their guard against possible sentimental responses thet failed to see how the text has elements which create safeguards against sentimentality.

Something very different occurred in the spoken monologues. The invitation was rejected. Now the important point here is to note the process by which the invitation was avoided, how initial thought is sifted and immediate reactions are scrutinised.

In the example given, the student senses immediately that "he does not want to cry" but her reason for this is a weak one - because he has left the world of childhood "he has left the natural reaction behind him". She leaves this central idea of the poem, the poet struggling against loose feeling and muses on what might seem irrelevant associations - her shock that it was a man crying, her own memories of childhood. Shen then returns to puzzling out why he is weeping and she moves into the important insight that he is not "weeping to belong to the old Sunday evenings" but "its sort of lamenting what is past, lamenting something that will never be experienced again". She then returns to her own reflections on childhood - "why is it that when we grow up we don't cry except at funerals" butthen moves back to the idea of his not wanting to cry and in doing so she notices the important phrase "insidious mastery". But now her reason for realising that it is not a sentimental poem is a much more insightful one. She realises that to indulge in weeping would be a betrayal.

Other monologues collected show a similar circular movement in getting at the poem. Extracts from other student's attempt shows a similar movement. She does it by teasing away at the important word "insidious".

> "At first I thought it was sentimental but the word insidious jars."
>
> "Everybody at some time in their lives looks back on the past and longs for it. Memories although happy are tinged with sadness. And so it is with this man "weeping like a child for the past."
>
> "When he says 'in spite of myself the insidious mastery of song' - as though he did not want to - as though in some way he is scared but is powerless to do anything about it."
>
> "I can see perhaps where that 'insidious' fits in - like Judas - he does not trust it - he is ashamed or afraid of it."

I would like to make the following observations on the monologues, aware that though the evidence given here is small, the observations carry important implications for teaching literature.

1. How much knowledge about the techniques of poetry should students have? It is a question that always arouses controversy with my student teachers. What should they know? In what form? At what age? Is it true that too many students, from an early age, expect that there are certain ways to talk/write about poetry and that such talking/writing involves the techniques of poetry - rhythm, rhyme, imagery, symbolism, etc. As stringent a critic as I.A. Richards has this to say about the problem. It is a lengthy quotation but one worth dwelling on.

> "Technical pre-suppositions, though they may trap even intelligent readers, are not a very interesting subject and may be dealt with briefly. They interfere whenever we make the mistake of supposing either that the means a poet uses are valuable for their own sake, or that they can be prescribed without reference to his aim, so that by mere inquiry into the means we can conclude as to the value. Put in this form the mistake may seem too silly to be frequent, but in fact it is extremely insidious, for the language of criticism and many of its current assumptions invite us constantly to commit it .... It is the blunder of attempting to say how the poet shall work without regard for what he is doing.[10]

Now what is important in the monologues quoted is that the students do not rely on such presumptions and that their own language is a powerful means of talking about the poem. I want to return to the point in the next section.

2. There is a sharp contrast between the way Richards' students seem to cling tenaciously to strong ideas that they have - especially to certain pre-conceived ideas about what to expect in poetry - and the monologues where there is a constant reuse of self-correction with the reader measuring the idea of time or image against his own experience by various means rejecting or building on that first reaction. James Britton wrote somewhere that "false trails will be rejected by the intelligent reader after a time". The evidence from the examples suggests that if the reader is allowed a positive handling of his own response there is every chance he will be able to come to intelligent grips with the text.

3. The way in which some of the students approached the meaning of significant words raises an important point about words, meaning and making meaning. I want to approach the problem by quoting the first few minutes of a lesson using Piano. The two students already quoted come from the class but were not present during the lesson.

Teacher Would you read the poem quietly. When you have read the poem would you please tell me any words you don't understand and then we can mark them out.

CLASS READS POEM

Have you finished? Are there any words you don't know?

P. Insidious.

T. Does anyone know what "insidious" means?

P. Sort of creeping in.

T. Sort of creeping in. Does that fit in? It comes from a Latin word meaning ambush.

P. Appassionato.

T. Appassionato.

P. A sort of sound.

T. Do you think it is a big sound or a little sound?

P. A big sound.

T. Why do you think it is a big sound - Judy?

P. Because it is a big word.

Laughter.

T. Any other words.

P. Vista.

T. Right, what is a vista?

P. A view.

T. A view.

I have seen the poem used by several teachers and each began by asking for meanings of particular words. Now it might be said that this is a fair way to start a poem if you think the class does not understand certain words. But there are two important things to say. For some reason there is an assumption that the class will not know the meaning. In this case it is very likely an unfair assumption. But more importantly such an attitude to meaning in poetry raises the issue of dictionary and interpretive meanings. Here the teacher is looking for the narrow dictionary meanings but the students in the monologues are puzzling out a fuller meaning in that they are searching out thematic connections in the poem.

Such an approach to the text demands a fragmentation of the students' response which largely ignores the feelings and connections which the term may have evoked. It seems possible that the teacher who approaches the text in this way would favour a teacher-directed, somewhat inquisitorial approach, arguing that such questioning is a way to encourage careful reading.

Implications.

We began this section with a question - can a recognition of the complexity of literary response influence our teaching? A reading of the previous pages might make some teachers think I have highlighted the difficulties rather than offered any solutions. It is not easy to state how such an awareness can influence our classroom teaching. I do not think the solution lies in curriculum materials or solely in classroom strategies though I have found since I have been thinking about the problem that I quite often give lessons where I share my response with the class. In such lessons the teacher can show what his opinions are and where they came from and he can show by example how the text helps shape his response to words and life. Somehow, he must, in his talking, leave his own formed views and go back to his pre-criticial response. This is not easy when we know the text as well as we usually do. A practical help is to ask the class to select a poem that you do not know and then let them see you musing and puzzling over meaning. Such an exercise can only lead to a growth in confidence, flexibility and openness.

More substantial solutions can be found in courses for the training of English teachers. A letter from a teacher quoted by Barbara Hardy is worthy of reflection : "It never occurred to me ... to think of literature as something that could be cut off from its particular social and psychological background and I was, I now realise, very fortunate to attend a college where it was the policy of the English Department to encourage the student to think of literature as an 'encounter' between the reader and the work and its writer, ... the creative and personal teaching of colleges of education is something which is seemingly ignored in the universities where teaching is still based largely on lectures, exams and mainly memory tests, creative writing is held in contempt and criticism is over-analytical and impersonal."[11] Barbara Hardy's comment on the letter - "If there is unity in these remarks it will be given by my feeling that our teaching of English is too impersonal, too analytic that it is unreal, academic in the worst sense of the word." Most of the students attending these courses are going to be English teachers and they are very likely to bring an attitude to literature teaching which will be very different from the one advocated in this book. Much more time should be spent in pre-service courses in studying examples of students talking and writing about literature. Teachers who have attended such courses as the one Hardy criticises are very likely to have narrow and orthodox views about literary response. Their assumptions may well become ingrained from habitual acceptance. The fundamental question that should be asked is how much active engagement is there within the text. This active engagement may be found in unlikely places and in language very unlike that associated with conventional literary criticism.

An even more worthwhile possibility is to find more opportunities of putting teachers in the position of learners. ("As teachers we should remember how long it takes even to respond to poems of our own choice, how often we are quite naturally numb to parts or wholes as we encounter literature and not expect too much from the students.") This is the task we set ourselves in the first day of the commission when we discussed the poems of Ted Hughes and Howard Nemerov. What kinds of situations can we set up which will make teachers more aware of their own response to art? I am arguing here that surely most teachers barge in with that aggressive "highwayman" attitude not because of a limited or blunted sensibility but because they have forgotten or not been encouraged to be aware of the tentative and complex nature of their own responses. The following are statements by teachers from the Commission when faced with the task of talking about Hughes' poem.

> My responses to this poem and where it leads me ... are uncertain, still subject to change, moderation, review.
>
> I don't seem to be able to get further ... with unravelling a meaning. My response is simply to enjoy the wolfish words and the way the words have been played with, and I seem not to be so interested in the meaning.

> But look at the responses we have had around the group. I obviously felt that my emotional impression which has coloured my interpretation, is obviously different from some others, because I see this man as the gift of the wolf's head or becoming the wolf's head.

It seems reasonable to assume that such tentative awareness that should characterise our conversations with our colleagues will influence our approach to our students' stumbling efforts in the classroom.

THE PARTIAL OR SELECTIVE RESPONSE

In this section I want to argue that any genuine response must reveal some kind of affective involvement - the question is not one of Text OR Reader, it is one of Text AND Reader. It is possible that written personal responses, circular, anecdotal, partial, may disturb some teachers too accustomed to the explicit and the formulated. D.W. Harding wrote at Dartmouth:

> "We need to encourage, very warmly, verifications from personal experience, not frown on the 'That's me' identification with a character ... People who need to use the concept of 'discipline' in talking about response will be uneasy about the freedom of 'That's me', but it can perhaps be accommodated even to a literary respect for the work of art. 'That's me' has two components, and our aim is to move dynamically from the 'me' of personal identification to the 'that' of the poem or the object in the poem. The discipline lies in the attentiveness to the 'that', and it should be made plain that there is no real dichotomy here, but a natural movement from subject to object and back again." 12

In this section I want to deal with attitude of the teacher to the written responses of his students, arguing that while our primary concern is with encouraging the fullest personal experience of the text we also have the duty of developing more attentive readers. I want to argue with Harding that we will get nowhere if we do not accept their limited responses but go further and argue that such responses can give us the greatest opportunities to move them on to more refined responses. The partial response must be welcomed, not only because it is likely to be more honest, but because it gives us the best chance of setting up and continuing a conversation in the classroom.

We can start by looking at the concept of conversation. Eric Hadley, in an unpublished paper, argues that we have not fully come to terms with the radicalism of our belief in the value of conversation in the classroom. He quotes Michael Oakeshott's definition of conversation - "an unrehearsed intellectual adventure".

> "In conversation, 'facts' appear only to be resolved once more into the possibilities from which they were made; 'certainties' are shown to be combustible, not by being brought in contact with other 'certainties' or with doubts, but by being kindled by the presence

> of ideas of another order; approximations are revealed between notions normally remote from one another. Thoughts of different species take wing and play round one another, responding to each other's movements and provoking one another to fresh exertions.

He then analyses a piece of writing by a student.

> "An essential element of Antony and Cleopatra is the marked contrast between the worlds of Egypt and Rome. D.A. Traversi in his book on the Roman plays called it the contrast between 'the sensuous luxury of Egypt... and the severe practical genious of Rome'. And this, I think sums up the difference nicely."

He rightly points to the limitations of such writing - the confidence, the assertiveness, the high level of abstraction which betrays a grossly over-simplified view of the play. Above all it shows the absence of any real conversation opened up between the reader and the text. Hadley puts it this way - "He has neither discovered his own voice nor engaged in any meaningful way with Shakespeare's."

In contrast with such writing he considers an extract from a student writing on Blake's Poison Tree:

> "There is a sense of discovery about the poem. It is not just the telling but it is the state of mind he is left with at the close; his whole life has been taken up with this. Thus he is relieved when he can see the result of his labours - the use of 'glad' shows this - 'In the morning glad I see...'. There is something innocent about the word 'glad' even though it is strange that he should feel glad - but then he has done something - it is his work which he has slaved at with his 'tears', his 'smiles' and his 'soft deceitful wiles'. The relief is shown in the last two lines which are more reposed and calm. There is an uneasy confidence about these lines, the way they are spoken - one gets the feeling that he might even let it happen again."

I cannot do better than Hadley's comment on such writing:

> "It is not only a conversation between the writer and the poet, but in contrast with the first passage, the pauses are invitations to interjection, to 'fresh exertions' on the part of other participants in a conversation with the poet - what I take us as meaning when we say that we cannot 'exhaust' a literary work, cannot 'know' it."

I want now to look further at this problem by looking at the language of literary response. There has been little systematic investigation of such language, especially in the early years of schooling, and if one considers the amount of time spent by students writing about literature this seems a serious omission.

For a number of years I had been uneasy about much of the writing that I was receiving from my students - graduates, matriculation students, younger pupils. It suddenly seemed to me that for a good number of years I had been asking hundreds and hundreds of students to do something for thousands and thousands of hours that I had never really thought about. In 1969 Harold Rosen posed some questions which sharply pointed to me that my fears and doubts had been justified. Among his questions:

Does much of the written work consist of the pupil, in order to show what he knows, telling the teacher what he already knows so that he may judge whether the pupils knows it? Is it in fact a pseudo communication?

Does the preparation for written work give the pupil the confidence that he has something of his own to say and can say it in his own words?

How much freedom is there for comment, doubt and puzzlement?[13]

The work of James Britton and his colleagues gave me a more positive lead. Britton argues that students must be allowed to explore experience in their writing in what he calls "expressive language":

> "As I have said, I think most of the work written in the elementary school will be in the expressive and the transitional categories. I want now to suggest that it would be dangerous to try to foreshorten that development. If you try to make a short-cut it will probably end by being a short circuit. You cannot, I believe, teach the referential, the expository, as such, it has to be arrived at, it seems to me, by the shedding of certain aspects of the expressive. The shedding process is highly intricate: it is as though there existed a delicately adjusted threshold which allows the integrity and individuality of the writer to move through into the writing yet leaves the finished product objective, referential. By short circuiting the process, I believe we produce the form of expository writing without the vigour, the personality, of a writer - a linguistic tool which will have very limited uses indeed." [14]

Britton's notion of expressive language needs more careful scrutiny, particularly in the "shedding process" where the writing moves across the "delicately adjusted threshold" into the referential, but for the purpose of this argument I think it has the following characteristics:

> It is the language with which we think.
> It is the language with which we first formulate new ideas.
> It is the language we use when we are confident of the support of our audience - the language of our conversation.
> And most importantly it is the language with which we can do some powerful thinking.

In what ways can our understanding and acceptance of such language help us in our work of teaching literature? What can the language look like and what work can it be doing?

There has been considerable work done on analysing class conversations about poetry, much of it in small groups. In a small booklet, I analysed two small groups of students discussing Roethke's poem, Old Florist.[15] In it I discuss the emotional involvement of the students in the discussion - this comes out in some of the anecdotal references but also in the rather excited movement of the talk. But the most important point gained from the analysis was the quality of the insight into the poem that was achieved in the freewheeling discussion. I argued there that the associative thinking in the conversation allowed a commendable insight into the sense, feeling, tone and intention of the poem.

Another useful example is in Bernard Newsome's and Margaret Mallett's Talking Writing and Learning 8-13 where the authors analyse a tape of some students talking about a poem by one of the group.[16] The analysis shows how the group achieves certain school objectives in this discussion:

> "The group responds to the whole poem, as well as its parts. The group relates the poem to their own knowledge and experience, with the two-fold purpose of penetrating further into the poem and understanding themselves better. The group relates what they are reading to what they have read in the past, principally in order to build up a cumulative insight. Children expand their abilities to respond sensitively to the properties of language.

Now these are considerable achievements but what is important here is that all that is done in the loose, informal language of ordinary conversation - Britton's "expressive".

But this work has been done on talking in the classroom and it is possible that, over the past few years, we have become much more aware of the possibilities of informal talk in the classroom. It is possible also that a professional conservatism takes over when we come to writing.

I want to look at some examples of writing about literature from a student teacher. She was concerned about the lack of personal engagement with the text when the students were writing, "the lack of interaction between the voice of the author and the voice of the reader". Here is an example of Robyn writing about extremely difficult poems by Michael Dransfield:

> "These two poems were fairly easy to understand. The language was simple, he didn't use very many complicated words to make his poems sound better. Dransfield writes about nature a lot, he also writes about time.

1. The student seems to have certain preconceptions about poetry and writing about poetry - its subject matter, its language, its techniques. There is a kind of technical dogmatism about it, an unthinking application of rules and principles. The student betrays all the anxiety or laziness of a person who has come to accept certain maxims and rules and takes refuge in them. The important question is what kind of classroom work, processes, attitudes have led to this kind of formulaic emptiness.

2. This simplistic view of the way we write about literature leads to two major problems. The first is the depersonalising of the reader's response but just as important, as Barbara Hardy points out, there is a

   > "depersonalising of the work of art itself. If you are too interested in symbolism, or imagery, or structural relations, you can talk about a novel by Dirheus, or a

> novel by George Elias, or a novel by D.H. Lawrence, a novel by Kafka as if they were more or less the same thing. In talking about personal response, I have in mind not just the personal experience of the reader but also the personal quality, the personality and the personal life of the author." 17

The teacher worked out a series of lessons to encourage the class to rely more on their own responses in the hope that such exercises would encourage a more genuine attentiveness to the text. She found very quickly that there was a change in the way the class started talking about poems but she found also that she was receiving a different kind of written response.

Here are some examples: Stephanie is writing about Slessor's Night Ride:

> "'Gas flowing on the yellow platform' seems to be describing the yellowy lights and effects of a dreamy illusion. 'Voices running up and down' adds to this image of a dreamy atmosphere. I recall once, when I was younger, a hotel I was staying in. Outside the door I could hear and distinguish voices going up and down the corridor like in this poem."

Margaret is writing about Stow's poem Wine and is puzzling over the last two lines:

> "'I strike the intolerable window
> Another year and the bubbles rise bitterly in my veins'.
> He has left it until the end to break the harmony. I don't fully understand the meaning behind the part 'I strike the intolerable window'. Perhaps like a child locked in a room as a punishment, he feels he is trapped, and can't escape from it - that there are hidden boundaries keeping him a prisoner. I think he might have some mysterious phobia about time, I think that because he is so conscious of it, and realises that it will never be that minute again, he feels that he must live life to the fullest."

Here is Stephanie on a line from At Sandalwood:

> "The christmastrees and blackboys, tougher than ancestors bloom in a fume of bees" is one of the examples of Stow's ancestral mentions. The christmastrees and blackboys must be hardy, if not indestructable under the sun's fiery rays, otherwise, they would whither and die. Ancestors always appear tough and perfect. In my grandmother's sitting room, there are yellow and stale photographs of great grandparents I never knew. They stand so rigidly with one hand resting stiffly on the arm of a chair, unsmilingly glaring into the camera, and at me when I look at them. To me they appear as a monument of rock solid foundation, as though nothing would have thwarted their courage and perseverance. I think of these photographs and the tough ancestors in them when I read that sentence."

The teacher is Lyn De Reus of Tasmania. I am grateful to her for being able to use these examples.

Here is part of David's response to two difficult poems by Michael Dransfield:

Floating, rising from the street
Walking on light until we see a
Gull
Reach for it and become that bird
Free
Bursting towards the depth of the sky
Surrounded by amazing beauty of light patterns.

What can we say about such writing?

1. The examples have many of the qualities of Britton's idea of the expressive - the relaxed style; the references to the writer's own life; the unselfconscious puzzling out of meaning. But because it is written in this way we can make some other important observations.

2. There is an admirable tentativeness - admissions of uncertainty which remind us of Leavis - "that intelligent and conscious incompleteness which carries with it the principle of growth". Such pieces of writing are to be welcomed because they are not borrowed, not generalised and more importantly, not final.

3. What we can also learn is that such writing can be relaxed, personal anecdotal without being loose and self-indulgent. It can do justice to the spirit and autonomy of the poem. One senses a movement in the responses - a movement in language from the expressive to the transactional and back again, and a movement from the text to the reader and back again. There is no real dichotomy here. These examples illustrate that most important observation from the Dartmouth Conference:

   "What purposes are served when writing moves towards the expressive role ... I think the main clue lies in the writer's release from the demands of an audience and his sense rather of their support ... unless one knows about the possibilities, such writing can be easily disregarded or pre-empted."[18]

4. But perhaps the most important classroom point concerns the possibilities that such writing gives to the teacher in any ongoing conversation in the classroom. Not only has the conversation closed between the student and the text in the *Antony and Cleopatra* piece but such writing leaves little scope for the teacher to engage in any further discussion with the writer.

Instead of forcing our students into hurried explicit formulations we need our classrooms to be places for *critical* sharing of our personal responses. The point here is that such insights as those in the above examples, because they are partially formed and because they are honest, allow the teacher to move in with further demands. The situation will dictate whether the discussion is a class or a personal one but the teacher's probing can be on a "human" or a "critical" level.

I.A. Richards took a hard line on irrelevant associations arguing that they can be an important hindrance to good reading.* I would prefer to think that such associations provide the teacher with possibilities for further discussion, such discussion, at its best, raising further insights about the text. Can we for example, take up Stephanie's memories of the hotel and her grandparents?

The kind of discussion I am thinking of is exemplified in the following classroom incidents. A teacher was discussing love poems with a class of apprentices. He read Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 and one of the class said: "I had a mate, sir and he took his bird on the back of his bike and they had an accident and her face was all cut up and he never went out with her again. That wasn't love, sir, was it?" The teacher invited the class to first sort out the moral implications of the question but in the ensuing discussion he was able to return to the text to puzzle out Shakespeare's views on love. This involved closely talking about meanings of lines but the discussion was placed in a human context provided by the student's digression. D.W. Harding put it this way: "A toleration of the selective or superficial responses may really be a way in. Recognising the response implicit in an emphasis that looks odd or hostile is an important action of the teacher's sensibility."

There was a class of women who were studying Antony and Cleopatra and the play was rejected by the majority of the group because of their personal dislike of Cleopatra. The students were responding to the character as they would to one in real life and they were rejecting her because they saw her as a threat to marital peace. The discussion went on to enquire what her function was in the play. The discussion helped them to perceive that her vices and weaknesses, like those of Antony, are mixed with traits that make their struggle and downfall significant. The teacher argued that the discussion about Cleopatra's character led to deeper insights about her tragic position. The important point here is that the further insights grew out of a limited intense personal and human reaction.

---

* It should not be thought that wayward readings only come from younger readers. There are a number of critics with their interpretation of the first line of Wyatt's "They flee from me". The line is "They flee from me that sometyme did me seek". Here are some of the critics on the question who are "THEY".

An unstated number of women who have proved faithless to the poet. (Arthur K. Moore).
Not only lost loves but lost powers of love. (Edward Lucie-Smith)
Hangers-on, courtiers, princes' favourites. (S.F. Johnson)
False friends, those who once enjoyed the poet's hospitality (George Whiting)
One particular mistress, now estranged. (E.E. Duncan-Jones, F.W. Bateson)
A woman seen in terms of wild beasts, creatures to be tamed. (Arnold Stein)
A woman seen in terms of a falcon. (A.K. Moore)
Doves, especially the doves of Venus. (F. Combellack)
Birds of an earlier season, now migrated. (S.F. Johnson)
Birds as a symbol of being forsaken. (J.D. Hainsworth)
Birds, mice or rats which prisoners feed in their cells. (William Empson)
Does, graceful, curious and skittish. (Leonard Dean)
Deer (as in *Whoso list to hunt)*. (F.W. Bateson)
From a Theory of Communication by Philip Hobsbaum.

Barbara Hardy gives us an example from university teaching. She describes how she had certain fixed ideas about Hardy's poem "During Wind and Rain". A student challenged her ideas about the poem by drawing on his strong personal feelings about families and institutions. Her first reaction was that his response was inappropriate and mistaken but his view was discussed in class. Some time later she realised, in thinking about the poem again,

> "that the student was not just rejecting the poem for the sake of his necessary social and personal pretext, but was seeing something in it which I had missed ... mediating on what I thought I had tolerated, I came to a better understanding of the poem as well as the student." 20

But such 'open' examples of writing from the school students also allows us to develop discussion on a more critical level. Such questions as the following show that we are not only taking their writing seriously but we are inviting them to go back again to the text.

> Is he satisfied with his interpretation?
> Have his preoccupations led him to exaggerate certain things in the poem and ignore others?
> Why was one student's reactions so different from the others?
> Why did he choose to concentrate on these lines rather than others?
> Does his memory of so and so help him to understand the poem?
> In what way?

What we are arguing here is that such responses give the teacher a chance to

(1) encourage further scrutiny of the text,

(2) respond both to the writer as well as to what he has written.

REFERENCES

1. Quoted in J.M. Newton's "Literary Criticism, Universities, Murder" in *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1971, p.350.

2. op. cit., p.351.

3. D. Daiches, *Literary Essays,* Oliver and Boyd, p.178.

4. I.A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.317.

5. M. Meek et al., *The Cool Web,* The Bodley Head, p.413.

6. op. cit., p.318.

7. D.W. Haring, *Experience into Islands*, Penguin, p.9.

8. L. Rosenblatt, "Towards a Transitional Theory of Reading" in *Journal of Reading Behaviours,* Vol. 1, 1969.

9. op. cit., p.105.

10. op. cit., p.294.

11. B. Hardy, "The Teaching of Literature in the University: Some Problems", in *English in Education*, Vol. 7, 1973.

12. D.W. Harding, " Response to Literature", in M. Meek et al., *The Cool Web*, The Bodley Head, p.390.

13. D. Barnes, et al., *Language, the Learner and the School*, Penguin, p.142.

14. E. Evertts, *Explanations in Children's Writing*, N.C.T.E., 1970.

15. D. Mallick, *Small Group Discussion: Children Talking About a Poem,* E.T.A. of N.S.W., 1974.

16. M. Mallett and B. Newsome, *Talking, Writing and Learning 8-13,* Evans/Methuen, 1977, pp.79-86.

17. B. Hardy, "The Teaching of Literature in the University: Some Problems", in *English in Education*, Vol. 7, 1973.

18. J. Dixon, *Growth Through English*, Oxford University Press, p.134.

19. op. cit., p.391.

20. op. cit., p.29.

AFTERWORD AND A WAY AHEAD

Peter Moss and

Christine Higgins (AUSTRALIA)

Much has been written in these papers, both explicitly and implicitly, about the importance of English as a humanising discipline and more specifically about the importance of literature in the imaginative development of the individual and its significance for our culture. We would all agree that literature provides a unique kind of knowledge about the life of an age and about the individuals who inhabit it - or to use Richard Hoggart's words:

> "without the literary witness, the student of society will be blind to the fullness of a society's life." (1970: 20).

Despite this, English teachers tend to lose sight of the culture that produced the literature they are dealing with - perhaps because of their involvement with the text itself. However, at this particular time we have been concerning ourselves with the future and scrutinising current teaching practices and trends to assess their likely suitability and relevance for the unknown time before us. Thus it is salutory for us to look very closely at this increasingly fast-paced, technological, mass-produced culture we inhabit and for which we are preparing our students.

Ours is increasingly a visual culture. We are daily bombarded by images - from television, advertising displays, films and news photography. Visual and aural modes of communication are increasingly challenging the supremacy of the written form. The mass media and their messages - products of modern post industrial society - are far more pervasive and, for many people, more familiar and "transparent" than is literature - the product of a culture very different in organization and ideology from the one we share. Our students, for the most part, and the community at large turn to the media for information about the world, to media fictions for escape or emotional confirmation. It is the media, in endless, neat, time packages that now demonstrate what is approved behaviour and what is not; what are acceptable attitudes and what are not and what are suitable goals for people to strive for in this society. Mass culture thus weighs heavily upon the structure of consciousness.

The media present not life but illusion (form without substance); not thought but sentiment; not experience but stereotyped imitations of experience. Whereas the media scale down and simplify, literature provides the complexity and the concreteness of experience; the media offer surfaces, literature invites contemplation of dense layers of meaning. Whereas the media are hostile to the past (because they wish to tempt their consumers to live in a pseudo-world of a constant present), literature requires an historical perspective, a consciousness of past and present, of narrative progression, of cause and effect - indeed fully embodies a sense of cultural continuity because it recreates, imaginatively, human affairs developing and changing and responding to historical contexts.

What we have really been suggesting here is the fact that the media are dangerously subversive of many values and significances we have always ascribed to literature. By means of language and images the media constantly provide a particular reading of reality which is presented so as to seem the only normal or rational or natural way to see the world. But the symbolic world is always different from the real world it represents, and the media's particular presentation of reality merely reflects the ideological structure of this society.

Thus it is easy for people to be overwhelmed and "mystified" by the apparent actuality and factuality of the media, so that they find it difficult to accept abstractions - particularly those that contradict appearances. Max Horkheimer in The Eclipse of Reason, and other pessimistic critics of mass culture thus see the major threat to civilisation arising from the restricted language and thought codes relentlessly used and disseminated by the mass media. If it is indeed true that the liberal tradition of critical thought is at stake then what is also threatened is the whole future of democracy.

It is English as premier humanities discipline, vitally concerned with language and thought, that can provide critical tools to combat the culturally debilitating effect of the mass media. The first step must be a concentrated effort to "demystify" the various media one by one - to crack the codes that structure the particular "language" of the media in order to extract their underlying meanings.

We must ourselves learn to accept these media messages as forms of discourse, as texts, admit them to our classrooms and analyse them using appropriate critical tools. While doing so, we could well use literature as an oppositional force - set it against the media, in order to examine language, form, messages, values. In the process, hopefully, we may well be involving our students in an examination of our society, its rituals, its values and ideological framework.

This approach requires not only an extension of the traditional content of English so as to include mass media texts, but also requires revitalised methods of literature teaching. Literary texts should be selected with particular care for the task and should be handled in such a way as to invite a genuine response to or engagement with the text by the student. There must be far more concern with the language of literature and its form - areas often side-stepped in traditional literature teaching. Response to literature is an area that has been widely discussed in these papers but despite the variety of approaches to involve student engagement so ably demonstrated elsewhere in this book, it may be that "Reading and Response" is already a quaint issue, passé and far removed from cultural realities. In the near-future, the inner or imaginative worlds of our students will be under threat of invasion from an ever-increasing subtlety and brilliance of technological media innovations.

The education of the future and English teaching, in particular, might do well to consider freeing people from some of the existing cultural restraints by providing them with the sort of intellectual tools which are necessary to produce an aware, discriminatory citizenry - capable not just of accepting society as it is, but of scrutinizing it and working towards changing it.

One of the major difficulties in realising a new awareness is that the media are potent forces which work against creative living and fullness of experience. The many voices of literature, perceived in different resonances through the discourses which readers impose, are our defences against the ubiquitousness of media dramas and especially against their potential for flattening consciousness; and also our weapons for counter-attack. The issue for us all lies in these voices - in the voicings of our own 'stories'; in the inner voice directed outward shouting its own astonishment against the media stereotypes. It is the human voice in its liveliest most-varied form, in Literature, which is both our challenge and our method.

The discussions, the practices, and the collaborations in this volume give some confidence that the future will be met both with the needful creative toughness and with the realising social purposes essential for the new work to begin.

References

Hoggart, R. (1970): Speaking to Each Other: about literature. Penguin.

Horkheimer, R. (1970): The Eclipse of Reason. Heinemann, London.

APPENDIX

THE COMPANIONS

There used to be gods in everything, and now they've gone.
A small one, I remember, in a green-gray stone,
Would watch me go by with his still eyes of a toad,
And in the branch of an elm that hung across the road
Another was; he creaked at me on windless days.
Now that he's gone I think he might have wanted praise
For trying to speak my language and getting that far at least
Along on the imitation of a speaking beast.

Maybe he wanted help, maybe they all cried out
As they could, or stared helpless to enter into thought
With "read me", "answer me", or "teach me how to be
Whatever I am, and in return for teaching me
I'll tell you what I was in you, how greater far
Than I are seeking you in fountain, sun, and star."
That's but interpretation, the deep folly of man
To think that things can squeak at him more than things can.

And yet there came those voices up out of the ground
And got into my head, until articulate sound
Might speak them to themselves. We went a certain way
Together on that road, and then I turned away.
I must have done, I guess, to have grown so abstract
That all the lonely summer night's become but fact,
Than when the cricket signals I no longer listen,
Nor read the glowworms' constellations when they glisten.

Howard Nemerov

(From The Poems of Howard Nemerov, University of Chicago
Press, 1977. Reprinted by permission of the author.)

FEBRUARY

The wolf with its belly stitched full of big pebbles
Nibelung wolves barbed like black pineforest
Against a red sky, over blue snow; or that long grin
Above the tucked coverlet - none suffice.

A photograph; the hairless, knuckled feet
Of the last wolf killed in Britain spoiled him for wolves;
The worse since has been so much mere Alsation,
Now it is the dream cries "Wolf!" where these feet

Print the moonlit doorstep, or run and run
Through the hush of parkland, bodiless, headless;
With small seeming of inconvenience
By day, too, pursue, siege all thought;

Bring him to an abrupt poring stop
Over engravings of gibbet-hung wolves
As at a cage where the scraggy Spanish wolf
Danced, smiling, brown eyes doggily begging

A ball to be thrown. These feet, deprived,
Disdaining all that are caged, or storied, or pictured,
Through and throughout the true world search
For their vanished head, for the world

Vanished with the head, the teeth, the quick eyes - .
Now, lest they choose his head,
Under severe moons he sits making
Wolf-masks, mouths clamped well into the world.

Ted Hughes

(From Lupercal, Faber and Faber, 1960. Reprinted by
permission of the publisher.)

WELSH INCIDENT

"But that was nothing to what things came out
From the sea-caves of Criccieth yonder."
"What were they? Mermaids? dragons? ghosts?"
"What were they, then?"
"All sorts of queer things,

Things never seen or heard or written about,
Very strange, un-Welsh, utterly peculiar
Things. Oh, solid enough they seemed to touch,
Had anyone dared it. Marvellous creation,
All various shapes and sizes and no sizes,
All new, each perfectly unlike his neighbour,
Though all came moving slowly out together."
"Describe one of them."
"I am unable."
"What were their colours?"
"Mostly nameless colours,
Colours you'd like to see; but one was puce
Or perhaps more like crimson, but not purplish.
Some had no colour."
"Tell me, had they legs?"
"Not a leg or foot among them that I saw."
"But did these things come out in any order?
What o'clock was it? What was the day of the week?
Who else was present? What was the weather?"
"I was coming to that. It was half-past three
On Easter Tuesday last. The sun was shining.
The Harlech Silver Band played Marchog Jesu
On thirty-seven shimmering instruments,
Collecting for Carnarvon's (Fever) Hospital Fund.
The populations of Pwllheli, Criccieth,
Portmadoc, Borth, Tremadoc, Penryhyndeudraeth,
Were all assembled. Criccieth's mayor addressed them
First in good Welsh and then in fluent English,
Twisting his fingers in his chain of office,
Welcoming the things. They came out on the sand,
Not keeping time to the band, moving seaward
Silently at a snail's pace. But at last
The most odd, indescribable thing of all
Which hardly one man there could see for wonder
Did something recognizably a something."
"Well, what?"
"It made a noise."
"A frightening noise?"
"No, no."
"A musical noise? A noise of scuffling?"
"No, but a very loud, respectable noise -
Like groaning to oneself on Sunday morning
In Chapel, close before the second psalm."
"What did the mayor do?"
"I was coming to that."

Robert Graves

(From The Collected Poems of Robert Graves 1914-1947,
Cassell and Co. Reprinted by permission of the
publisher.)